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*Punto de Vista* and the Argentine Intellectual Field: From  
Dictatorship to Democracy

Sofia Mercader

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in Hispanic Studies

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## Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

## Abbreviations

CAS – Comisión Argentina de Solidaridad

CCD – Centro Clandestino de Detención

CCS – Club de Cultura Socialista

CEAL – Centro Editor de América Latina

CONADEP – Comisión Nacional por la Desaparición de Personas

CONICET – Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas

COSPA – Comité de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Argentino

ERP – Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo

FLACSO – Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales

GAN – Gran Acuerdo Nacional

IACHR – Inter American Commission for Human Rights

PCR – Partido Comunista Revolucionario

PEHESA – Programa de Estudios de Historia Económica y Social Americana

SADAF – Sociedad Argentina de Análisis Filosófico

UBA – Universidad de Buenos Aires



## Abstract

This thesis examines the development of the Argentine magazine *Punto de Vista* (1978-2008) and its role in the cultural, political, and intellectual debates of the years surrounding the transition to democracy in Argentina (1983). Drawing from Bourdieu's concept of 'field', I argue that this magazine, and the group of intellectuals associated with it, represent a generation of people who have played a key role in the cultural and intellectual fields of contemporary Argentina.

This research contributes to the field of Latin American studies insofar as it provides the first comprehensive account of the development of the *Punto de Vista* group and, more generally, it provides a partial account of the Argentine intellectual field of the transition to democracy. This thesis also stems from a detailed analysis of the magazine's articles and the historical context in which it emerged and consolidated its prestige. It also stems from a variety primary sources, including interviews with a number of Argentine intellectuals carried out by the author, personal archives, and unedited archival material.

Following a chronological order, I trace back to the 1960s and early 1970s the *Punto de Vista* group's formative years, I later study the origins of the magazine in the context of the obscure years of dictatorship (1976-1983), and I explore the discussions set forth in the pages of the publication during the 1980s and 1990s, before and after the democratic transition. Thus, this thesis examines a variety of discussions, ranging from Argentine cultural history to politics, literature, and debates regarding the role of intellectuals, taking *Punto de Vista* as a focal point.

## Introduction

¿Acaso no estamos vivos los que después de tantos desastres sobrevivimos aún; o hemos perdido nuestra conciencia de lo justo y del porvenir de la patria porque hemos perdido algunas batallas? ¡Qué! ¿Se quedan también las ideas entre los despojos del combate?<sup>1</sup>

During the first year of his Presidency, Néstor Kirchner, who governed Argentina from 2003 to 2007, met with Argentine intellectuals a number of times. In a first meeting in 2003, Kirchner invited four men of letters – Carlos Altamirano, José Pablo Feinmann, Mario Wainfeld, and José Nun – to the Casa Rosada, Argentina's house of government.<sup>2</sup> On a later occasion, in 2004, Kirchner and his wife, and presidential successor, Cristina Fernández hosted a lunch for Tulio Halperín Donghi and Beatriz Sarlo at Quinta de Olivos, the presidential residence. During this meeting, Cristina Fernández alleged that Argentina lacked intellectuals because an entire generation of them had been wiped off the map by the military dictatorship that ruled the country from 1976 to 1983. Fernández's remark was not a particularly appropriate statement to make in front of two notable Argentine intellectuals who had themselves outlived the dictatorship. Sarlo replied that there was no way of knowing how many prominent thinkers were to be found amongst the thousands of victims of repression, introducing an element of tension in the conversation. The invitees left the meeting with a sense of dissatisfaction, 'Tulio, a este lugar no vengo más' said Sarlo to Halperín after leaving Olivos.<sup>3</sup>

The intellectuals mentioned above, who all outlived the dictatorship, belong to the same generation, in Karl Mannheim's sense of 'a particular kind of identity of location,

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<sup>1</sup> Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo*, 2nd edn (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1972), p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Héctor Pavón, 'Argentina: el regreso de los intelectuales públicos', *Nueva Sociedad*, no. 245 (May-June 2013), 149-62.

<sup>3</sup> Sarlo has described this encounter in two different interviews, conducted by Carol Pires and Josefina Licitra, respectively. See Carol Pires, 'Conmigo No. Beatriz Sarlo, la voz de la oposición en Argentina', *Piauí*, no. 63 (December 2011) <<http://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/materia/conmigo-no>> [accessed 10 April 2018]; Josefina Licitra, 'El ojo feroz de Beatriz Sarlo', *Revista Ya, El Mercurio* (Chile), 2 October 2012, pp. 60-64 (p. 63).

embracing related “age groups” embedded in a historical-social process’.<sup>4</sup> With the exception of Halperín Donghi, born in 1926, Altamirano, Feinmann, Nun, Sarlo, and Wainfeld were born in Argentina between the late 1930s and the mid-1940s. They grew up in the 1940s and 1950s and they attended Argentine public universities during the late 1950s and 1960s, when a rapid cultural modernisation merged with the revolutionary effervescence brought about by the Cuban Revolution and other left-wing movements across the world. Later, they became victims of the military dictatorship installed in 1976, which, in terms of its perpetration of violence and censorship, greatly exceeded previous dictatorships in Argentina.<sup>5</sup> As democracy was restored in 1983, many of them returned to their home country from exile while others gradually came out of the shadows of an internal exile.<sup>6</sup> Hence, in contrast to the notion that the military dictatorship left Argentina with no intellectuals, which is simply counterfactual, a high proportion of renowned intellectuals in today’s Argentina belong to this generation of people, born in the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century, survivors of the military dictatorship installed in 1976, and protagonists of the democratic transition that began in 1983.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the sociology of knowledge*, ed. by Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge, 1952), p. 292.

<sup>5</sup> The main bibliographical source for the study of the dictatorship period (1976-1983) is Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo, *La dictadura militar, 1976-1983: del golpe de estado a la restauración* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2003). Another comprehensive overview of the period is *Nueva Historia Argentina*, ed. by Juan Suriano, 13 vols (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1999-2005), X: *Dictadura y democracia (1976-1983)*, ed. by Juan Suriano (2005).

<sup>6</sup> The term ‘internal exile’ has been used to refer to the people who stayed in Argentina albeit being potential targets of the military. The term suggests that those living in an internal exile endured censorship, self-censorship, held precarious jobs, and, on occasion, lived in semi-clandestine conditions. In the case of intellectuals, the magazine *Punto de Vista* is exemplary of the cultural production of Argentine internal exile. For an account of the experience of internal exile in the case of intellectuals see Nora Pagano, ‘Las ciencias sociales en la dictadura argentina (1976-1981)’, in *La historiografía académica y la historiografía militante en Argentina y Uruguay*, ed. by Fernando Devoto and Nora Pagano (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2004), pp. 159-70.

<sup>7</sup> A fundamental analysis of this generation of intellectuals is Graciela Montaldo, *Intelectuales y artistas en la sociedad civil argentina en el fin de siglo*, Working Paper 4 (College Park, MD: Latin American Studies Centre, 1999). Montaldo argues that the cultural elite who forged their identity during the 1960s is the last generation in incarnating the figure of the modern intellectual in Argentina. Montaldo’s main argument is that, in the 1960s, when Peronism was banned, these intellectuals considered themselves as valid mediators between political and intellectual discourses, and the public. However, with the sociocultural changes brought about by the turn of the century and the apogee of new mediators between politics and the public, these intellectuals no longer found a specific role to play in society.

I will analyse in this thesis the trajectory of this generation of Argentine intellectuals through a publication that, for thirty years, was at the centre of what Pierre Bourdieu calls ‘the intellectual field’: *Punto de Vista*.<sup>8</sup> This little review – a term that I borrow from Thacker and Brooker’s work on modernist magazines, and which I will examine later in this introduction, along with the concept of intellectual field – was published between 1978 and 2008 in Buenos Aires and was founded by Carlos Altamirano, Beatriz Sarlo, and Ricardo Piglia.<sup>9</sup> This little review became, progressively, one of the most prestigious intellectual magazines in Argentina and abroad, as it established a solid network of subscriptions with universities in Europe, the United States and Latin America. Throughout these thirty years, *Punto de Vista* was published every four months and was funded by sales, subscriptions, and, on occasion, by individual donations.<sup>10</sup> The first three issues, however, were published quarterly (and therefore four issues, instead of three, were published in 1978). These first issues were funded by a left-wing political organisation, Vanguardia Comunista, whose leaders were kidnapped and disappeared by the military in August 1978, after which the magazine decoupled from the political group.<sup>11</sup>

During the initial years of *Punto de Vista*, when the review appeared in semi-clandestinity, its readership was scarce and the review sold 500 copies on average. Nonetheless, towards the mid-1980s sales and subscriptions increased as the review gained prestige, reaching 1300 copies and 300 subscriptions on average.<sup>12</sup> These figures already indicate the type of readership that *Punto de Vista* had, as the review did not aim

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<sup>8</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Intellectual field and creative project’, trans. by Sian France, *Social Science Information*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1 April 1969), 89-119. The original article was published as Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Champ intellectuel et project créateur’, *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 246 (November 1966), 865-906. The complete collection of *Punto de Vista* can be found, free access, in the webpage Bazar Americano <[www.bazaramericano.com](http://www.bazaramericano.com)> [accessed 30 June 2018] or, alternatively, in the site Archivo Histórico de Revistas Argentinas <[www.ahira.com.ar](http://www.ahira.com.ar)> [accessed 30 June 2018].

<sup>9</sup> Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, ‘General introduction’, in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, ed. by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009-2016), I: *Britain and Ireland 1880-1955* (2013), pp. 1-26 (pp. 12-21).

<sup>10</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, ‘Final’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 90 (April 2008), 1-2 (p. 2).

<sup>11</sup> Diego García and Sofia Mercader, ‘Tozuda modernidad: entrevista a Beatriz Sarlo’, *Artepolítica.com* (June 2013), <<http://artepolitica.com/articulos/entrevista-a-beatriz-sarlo/>> [accessed 29 August 2017].

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Beatriz Sarlo (Buenos Aires, 6 March 2017).

to a popular or massive public, but to an intellectual and sophisticated reader. In the words of *Punto de Vista*'s director, the magazine was addressed to 'un público intelectual, que mantenga una mirada atenta tanto sobre la cultura y el arte como sobre las ideologías y la política'.<sup>13</sup> These words also convey some of the topics of interest that define the review, whose masthead was 'revista de cultura', and therefore culture, in its numerous and diverse manifestations, was the main subject of analysis of its articles. The essays published in *Punto de Vista* covered topics from literary, cultural and aesthetic criticism to the history of ideas and intellectuals; from cultural and political sociology to cultural and mass media analysis.<sup>14</sup>

*Punto de Vista* was, also, a magazine that represented a group of people with shared intellectual and political affinities, who actively sought to bring in a unified voice, a point of view, into Argentina's cultural field. Although the composition of the *Punto de Vista* group went through several changes throughout the years, Beatriz Sarlo, the director, was a constant figure within the magazine and she played a leading role from the first to the last issue. In its initial years, the magazine's editorial board was comprised of its founders – Altamirano, Sarlo, and Piglia – and three other intellectuals, María Teresa Gramuglio, Hilda Sabato, and Hugo Vezzetti. After 1983, two additional prominent intellectuals, returning from exile, Juan Carlos Portantiero and José 'Pancho' Aricó, joined the editorial board, while Piglia left the magazine around this time. Throughout the 1990s, the group underwent further changes – the most relevant was the incorporation of Adrián Gorelik, who became thereafter an important figure within the group – and in 2004 three original members, Altamirano, Gramuglio and Sabato, left the review. After 2004, *Punto de Vista* was published for four more years, as it incorporated new and younger editors, who worked together until 2008, when the magazine finally ceased publication.

*Punto de Vista* was therefore a collective enterprise, and, particularly for the initial group, it provided an intellectual identity that defined, to a great extent, their careers. However, Sarlo's commitment to the magazine was exceptional, and I will keep coming

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<sup>13</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, 'Punto de Vista: una revista en dictadura y en democracia', in *La cultura de un siglo. América latina en sus revistas*, ed. by Saúl Sosnowski (Buenos Aires: Alianza, 1999), p. 523-33 (p. 533).

<sup>14</sup> *Punto de Vista*, 'Breve historia de *Punto de Vista*' [Leaflet accompanying the complete collection of *Punto de Vista* on CD] (Buenos Aires, 2009).

back to her trajectory and her work, as she imprinted on the magazine her worldview and preferences. The emotive editorial Sarlo wrote for the last issue of *Punto de Vista* expresses how closely related her biography is with the magazine's development, as she stated that '*Punto de Vista* fue la mayor y más constante influencia sobre mi vida [...]. Las únicas aguas que he navegado, durante treinta años, con la certeza de que son mi espacio natural fueron las de esta revista.'

<sup>15</sup>

I will nonetheless focus on the issues published between 1978 and 1993, years in which the initial group of editors remained constant, with the aforementioned exception of Piglia. I will examine how in the years between the installation of the military government in 1976 and the emergence, towards the beginning of the 1990s, of the neoliberal government led by President Carlos Menem, the *Punto de Vista* group shaped and consolidated itself as a prominent agent within the intellectual field. Focusing on this period will allow me to examine the ideological and cultural shifts experienced by these intellectuals and the role they played in the reconstruction of culture during this fast-changing period of Argentina's history, a period which includes the crucial transition to democracy.

<sup>16</sup>

The members of the initial editorial board are men and women who have developed prominent careers in their respective fields of expertise: Altamirano is an expert in intellectual history and was, for decades, Professor of Argentine Intellectual History at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). Gramuglio is a recognised literary critic

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<sup>15</sup> Sarlo, 'Final', p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> The concept of 'transition to democracy' has been largely analysed, particularly within the sphere of social sciences. The main work of reference is *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, ed. by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, 4 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). O'Donnell has offered a definition of 'transition to democracy' as follows: 'The "transition" is the interval between one political regime and another. [...] Transitions are delimited, on the one side, by the launching of the process of dissolution of an authoritarian regime and, on the other, by the installation of some form of democracy, the return of some form of authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative'. Guillermo O'Donnell, 'Introduction to the Latin American Cases', in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, ed. by O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, II: *Latin America*, pp. 3-18 (p. 6). An overview of the theoretical discussions about the concept of transition to democracy that followed O'Donnell's work is Scott Mainwaring, *Transitions to Democracy and Democratic Consolidation: Theoretical and Comparative Issues*, Working Paper 130 (Notre Dame, IN: Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, 1989). With regard to the transition to democracy in Argentina, apart from O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead's volume dedicated to the Latin American cases, see also Carlos Nino, *Radical Evil on Trial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), and *Ensayos sobre la transición democrática*, ed. by José Nun and Juan Carlos Portantiero (Buenos Aires, Punto Sur, 1987).

and was Professor of Argentine Literature at the same university, as was Hilda Sabato, who was Professor of Argentine History. Hugo Vezzetti was head of the Faculty of Psychology of the UBA, and a highly regarded intellectual for his work on memory studies, which focuses on the case of the last Argentine dictatorship. Portantiero and Aricó were also prominent figures of social sciences in Argentina and recognised scholars in their fields: Portantiero was Professor of sociology and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at UBA between 1990 and 1998, and Aricó was Professor at the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and a recognised specialist in Marxism. However, it is probably Sarlo and Piglia who have received most attention, the former as an intellectual who frequently writes opinion columns in national, widely-respected, newspapers and who is often invited to TV news programs to offer an analysis of current political events, the latter as one of the best contemporary Argentine writers.<sup>17</sup> In Europe and the United States, Sarlo has received wide recognition as a Latin Americanist; she has been visiting professor and researcher at, among other universities, Columbia, Berkeley and Cambridge, where she lectured on a variety of subjects, from Jorge Luis Borges' oeuvre to cultural and literary criticism in the postmodern age.<sup>18</sup> Piglia, alongside his fame as writer, has taught Literature at UBA and was Professor of Spanish and Portuguese languages and cultures at Princeton University between 2001 and 2011. However, it must be acknowledged that although some members of *Punto de Vista* have received more public attention than others, the publication was, in essence, a collective enterprise and not a sum of individual projects. I therefore aim to demonstrate how closely interwoven are the intellectual trajectories of the *Punto de Vista* group with the development of the magazine.

Furthermore, by studying the development of *Punto de Vista*, I also attempt to shed light on a constellation of local and foreign intellectuals who either contributed to this magazine or established a fluent communication with its editors. In this sense, *Punto*

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Daniel Balderston, 'Piglia, Ricardo', in *Latin American Writers*, ed. by Carlos Solé and Klaus Müller-Bergh (New York: Scribner's, 2002), pp. 403-13.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Jon Beasley-Murray, 'Translator's Introduction. "In Argentina"', in Beatriz Sarlo, *Scenes from Postmodern Life*, trans. by Jon Beasley-Murray (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. vii-xix. See also Adrián Griego, 'Beatriz Sarlo', Stanford Presidential Lectures in the Humanities and Arts, <<https://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/sarlo/>> [accessed 07 April 2018].

*de Vista* can be regarded as a prism reflecting a series of cultural, literary, and political debates in which both a wide network of intellectuals and the *Punto de Vista* group itself participated. To give an example of how well-connected *Punto de Vista* was with renowned intellectuals in Argentina and abroad, Jean Franco, whose works are fundamental references in Latin American cultural studies, wrote an article on parody and grotesque in Latin American literature for *Punto de Vista*'s very first issue, published in the midst of the most violent years of the dictatorship.<sup>19</sup> Other renowned scholars and intellectuals who were living in exile, such as the Uruguayan literary critic Ángel Rama, or the Argentine philosophers José Sazbón and Oscar Terán, all wrote special articles for *Punto de Vista* during these times of repression and censorship in Argentina. Another example of the relevance of *Punto de Vista* in the years of dictatorship, when its readership was particularly limited, is the publication of an extract of a novel that Ricardo Piglia was writing in those years. The editor of the Argentine publishing house Pomaire read the extract and offered Piglia the book contract for what was going to become his most celebrated work, *Respiración artificial*, considered by many the fundamental Argentine novel of the 1980s.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, this review even managed to promote a theoretical modernisation in the fields of cultural and literary criticism during the dictatorship period, by introducing cultural studies in Argentina, as I will examine in the first chapters.<sup>21</sup>

Although during its initial years *Punto de Vista* was a quite marginal publication growing in the interstices of the system of censorship implemented by the military, it progressively became a publication of reference within the intellectual field, especially after 1983, when democracy was restored in Argentina and the magazine was able to

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<sup>19</sup> Jean Franco, 'La parodia, lo grotesco y lo carnavalesco. Concepciones del personaje en la novela latinoamericana', *Punto de Vista*, no. 1 (March 1978), 3-7.

<sup>20</sup> See Ricardo Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, 3 vols (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2015-2017), III: *Un día en la vida* (2017), p. 79. For an overview of the relevance of *Respiración artificial* in Latin American literature see, for example, Arcadio Díaz Quiñones, 'Para empezar, Ricardo Piglia', in *Ricardo Piglia: Conversación en Princeton*, ed. by Arcadio Díaz Quiñones and others, 2nd edn, Cuadernos 2 (New Jersey: Program in Latin American Studies, Princeton University, 1999), pp. viii-xvii.

<sup>21</sup> For the reception of Raymond Williams in Argentina see Miguel Dalmaroni, 'La moda y la "trampa del sentido común". Sobre la operación Raymond Williams en *Punto de Vista*', *Orbis Tertius*, vol. 2, no. 5 (1997), 13-20. See also María Jimena Montaña, 'La recepción de Raymond Williams en la revista *Punto de Vista*: un retorno al sujeto, la historia y la experiencia', *Prácticas de Oficio. Investigación y reflexión en las Ciencias Sociales*, no. 5 (December 2009) < <http://ides.org.ar/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/artic31.pdf> > [accessed 7 April 2018].



incorporate new contributors and new debates. These years were characterised by the opening of channels of expression and the reconstruction of Argentine culture. In this context, the Punto de Vista group, together with many intellectuals who returned from exile, fuelled a project that had great importance for the democratic transition: the Club de Cultura Socialista (CCS), which played a key role in the restoration of solidarity links between many Argentines, whom the dictatorship had actively tried to disperse. During its more active years, the CCS hosted lectures by renowned intellectuals from different latitudes, such as the Post-Marxist philosophers Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, the Argentine historian Tulio Halperín Donghi, and the sociologist Alain Touraine, amongst many other social scientists, journalists and politicians from different parties aligned with the left or centre-left in Argentina and abroad. Even President Raúl Alfonsín, in charge of managing the difficult Argentine democratic transition in 1983, sought the advice of intellectuals from the Club. Sergio Bufano, Emilio de Ípola and Juan Carlos Portantiero, founders and active members of the CCS, wrote Alfonsín's most emblematic speech – and the latest memorable speech of Argentina's political history – the *Discurso de Parque Norte* of 1985.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the history of *Punto de Vista* does not only encompass an inner circle of men and women who were closely engaged with the project of the magazine, but also an outer circle of intellectuals, who contributed to it and were part of the social group constituted around the CCS, in which the entire staff of *Punto de Vista* participated initially.

As Argentina underwent a series of major political and social changes brought about by the transition to democracy, *Punto de Vista* became the magazine that writers, literary critics, historians, and social scientists – in short, the Argentine cultural elite – read. One prominent living historian in Argentina, Luis Alberto Romero, argued that in the 1980s, *Punto de Vista* was 'el punto de referencia para toda una franja cultural y política de nuestra sociedad'.<sup>23</sup> As we shall see, the magazine also had a decisive role as

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<sup>22</sup> According to Gerardo Aboy Carlés, who has closely studied the *Discurso de Parque Norte*, this speech has been the most important political document of Alfonsín's government. Gerardo Aboy Carlés, 'Parque Norte o la doble ruptura alfonsinista', in *La historia reciente. Argentina en democracia*, ed. by Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2004), pp. 35-50 (p. 45).

<sup>23</sup> Eduardo Pogoriles, 'Después de 30 años, cerró la revista *Punto de Vista*', *Clarín*, 3 April 2008, <[https://www.clarin.com/sociedad/despues-30-anos-cerro-revista-punto-vista\\_0\\_ry7MP5pCTK1.html](https://www.clarin.com/sociedad/despues-30-anos-cerro-revista-punto-vista_0_ry7MP5pCTK1.html)> [accessed 25 April 2018]. For other appreciations of *Punto de Vista* as a central magazine of Argentina's

an arbiter of taste in the Argentine literary field, and it included some important writers, such as Juan José Saer, into the national canon. I will also explore how *Punto de Vista* adopted, when its editors believed it necessary, political standpoints in regards to the events of the day. The magazine explicitly condemned the dictatorship and the Falklands/Malvinas War; it endorsed President Alfonsín's government and the trial against the military juntas, which began in 1985, and bitterly criticised *menemismo*, a political movement led by the Peronist President who succeeded Alfonsín in 1989, Carlos Menem.<sup>24</sup> In ideological terms, the members of *Punto de Vista* characterised themselves as 'intelectuales de izquierda en el marco de la democracia', a characterisation that conveyed both a left-leaning ideology and a democratic spirit.<sup>25</sup> This political positioning adopted by *Punto de Vista* would lead other intellectuals to question, in ideological terms, the group of people gathered around the magazine. *Unidos*, for example, was a magazine published in the early 1980s that sought to challenge the political views defended in *Punto de Vista* and the CCS from a Peronist perspective. *La Bizca* magazine, in the mid-1980s, also attempted to establish a polemical dialogue with *Punto de Vista*, this time from a far-left political stance.<sup>26</sup> As I will examine, the fact that other publications emerged as opponents of *Punto de Vista* in this period suggests that the magazine became an important agent of the Argentine intellectual field.

Therefore, by taking *Punto de Vista* as a focal point, I set out to analyse an entire cohort of Argentine intellectuals and a range of debates held by them at a particularly agitated period of Argentine history. In the same sense that Raymond Williams considers in 'The Bloomsbury Fraction' that the group, the movement, the circle, can tell us much about 'the larger society', the study of the *Punto de Vista* group and the magazine that

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cultural and literary life see Miguel Dalmaroni, 'El largo camino del silencio al consenso. La recepción de Saer en la Argentina (1964-1987)', in *Glosa. El entonado* ed. by Julio Premat. (Madrid-Córdoba: Archivos-Alción, 2006), pp. 607-664 (p. 643). See also Roxana Patiño, *Intelectuales en transición. Las revistas culturales argentinas (1981-1987)*, Cuadernos de Recienvenido no. 4 (São Paulo, Universidade de São Paulo, 1997), p. 23. In her text, Patiño has characterised *Punto de Vista* as the hegemonic magazine of the field of cultural magazines in 1980s Argentina.

<sup>24</sup> For a historical analysis of *menemismo* see *Los años de Menem. La construcción del orden neoliberal*, ed. by Alfredo Pucciarelli (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> *Punto de Vista*, 'Editorial. Décimo año', *Punto de Vista*, no. 30 (July-October 1987), 1-2 (p. 2).

<sup>26</sup> Roxana Patiño argues that the title *La Bizca* was a critical reference, via a visual metaphor, to *Punto de Vista*. Patiño, *Intelectuales en transición*, p. 20.

brought it together should shed light on Argentina's recent political and cultural history, and on the role intellectuals have played in society before and after the tragic dictatorship of 1976-1983.<sup>27</sup>

### Methodological questions

Two pressing methodological issues arise at this point. The first one involves the definition of the above-mentioned concept of intellectual field, which will be the central methodological notion upon which this research draws. The second methodological issue concerns the study of little reviews and their definition. In regards to the first issue, the tenets set forth by Pierre Bourdieu on the notion of intellectual field will be a key point of reference in this research. The insightful contributions of Bourdieu to the sociology of intellectuals are vast, and an exhaustive analysis of them would take up an entire thesis. Therefore, the following pages will focus on the aspects of Bourdieu's theory most relevant for this research as these aspects will underpin my analysis of *Punto de Vista*.

In his sociology of intellectuals Bourdieu integrates three main theoretical frameworks: an account of the social function of the symbolic, a theory of 'fields', and a theory of the circulation of different kinds of capital in modern societies.<sup>28</sup> The idea of the social function of the symbolic refers to the role of cultural representations at play in societies, which ultimately shape and define the logical and gnoseological structure of the social space. This viewpoint is the result of Bourdieu's aim to combine both the 'objectivist' and the 'subjectivist' perspective. According to the former, representations at play in the social space are exclusively explained by objective conditions independent

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<sup>27</sup> Raymond Williams, 'The Bloomsbury Fraction', in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), pp. 148-69 (p. 149).

<sup>28</sup> I cite this classification from the work of Carlos Altamirano, *Intelectuales. Notas de investigación sobre una tribu inquieta* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2013). This is a study of the different definitions of 'intellectuals' throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Altamirano argues in the section he dedicates to Bourdieu, it is not easy to provide a systematic clarification of the notion of intellectual field because Bourdieu has corrected it and slightly modified it throughout his many essays on this matter. Thus, I will follow Altamirano's tripartite classification in order to present an accessible overview of Bourdieu's main concepts with regard to the notion of intellectual field.

of human consciousness.<sup>29</sup> According to the latter, representations are the exclusive product of individual perceptions and experiences, independent of the social ground that shapes the consciousness of human beings. Aiming to transcend this dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism, Bourdieu argues that:

The perception of the social world is the product of a double structuring: on the objective side, it is socially structured because the properties attributed to agents or institutions present themselves in combinations that have very unequal probabilities: just as feathered animals are more likely to have wings than furry animals, so the possessors of a sophisticated mastery of language are more likely to be found in a museum than those who do not have this mastery. On the subjective side, it is structured because the schemes of perception and appreciation, especially those inscribed in language itself, express the state of relations of symbolic power.<sup>30</sup>

Rather than rejecting subjectivism and objectivism, Bourdieu considers that the study of social space would be benefitted by bringing together both perspectives within an account of the social function of the symbolic. Thus, the social world is understood both as objectively constituted, insofar as agents are affected by objective conditions which are beyond their own perceptions of the world, but also, as subjectively constituted, insofar as agents are subjected to predominant worldviews at stake in the social space. Two aspects of this quotation must be highlighted: on the one hand, Bourdieu uses the term ‘agents’ to refer to individuals or groups of individuals that act and interact in the social space. Throughout this thesis, I will borrow this term to refer to *Punto de Vista*, to its members, or, alternatively, to other intellectual groupings in Argentina, as this term allows us to understand them as active elements interacting in the social space defined here as the intellectual field. On the other hand, according to the quotation, the relations between agents are mediated by the symbolic, which Bourdieu alternatively defines as ‘the world of common sense’, ‘lifestyle’ or ‘vision of the world’.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Bourdieu claims that agents in the social space are subjected to symbolic struggles over the perception of the social world, or, in other words, ‘over the power to produce and to impose the legitimate

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<sup>29</sup> Pierre, Bourdieu, ‘Social Space and Symbolic Power’, trans. by Loic J. D. Wacquant, *Sociological Theory*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Spring, 1989), 14-25. This is a text of a lecture delivered at the University of California, San Diego, in March of 1986.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

vision of the world'.<sup>32</sup> The idea of symbolic struggles set forth by Bourdieu is particularly relevant for the study of intellectuals because it allows us to frame their discussions and their practices in the specific domain of the symbolic. It is in this domain that *Punto de Vista* deployed its strategies and staged its struggles, and where it was recognised and legitimised as an intellectual magazine.

Moreover, the symbolic struggles to which Bourdieu refers do not take place in a vacuum, but in what Bourdieu calls 'fields'. This is where the second aspect of Bourdieu's theory comes into play, namely, his theory of the field. According to Bourdieu the concept of field applies to different spheres of the social space, such as the cultural, the scientific, the economic, or the artistic. Bourdieu has defined 'field' by tracing an analogy with physical space: in physical space, there are forces in relation of opposition or affinity between physical bodies, constantly interacting according to rules that are specific of that field. In the field of forces, Bourdieu argues, elements struggle to preserve or transform the structure of the field.<sup>33</sup> Analogous to physical space, agents in any given field are in a constant struggle to preserve or redefine the structure of the field and preserve or redefine its rules, as a result of which the field is constantly transformed. To draw from a different analogy, in the economic field, agents compete for economic capital and those who accumulate more capital are more likely to impose their own rules to the rest of the agents. Similarly, in the cultural field, agents find themselves in a constant struggle too, but what is at stake is not economic but symbolic capital. As in the economic field, cultural capital is distributed unequally, and therefore those who possess more symbolic capital are in a position to, in turn, produce and legitimate symbolic goods. Therefore, the competition of agents in the cultural field is not for economic capital, but for amassing symbolic capital, which ultimately leads to recognition, consecration and prestige.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Bourdieu, 'Le fonctionnement du champ intellectuel', *Regards Sociologiques*, no. 17/18 (1999), 5-27 (p. 7).

<sup>34</sup> For a more detailed account of Bourdieu's theory of the cultural field see Randal Johnson, 'Editor's Introduction. Pierre Bourdieu on Art, Literature and Culture', in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. by Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 1-25.

Here, the third aspect of Bourdieu's theory comes into play, namely his theory of the circulation of different kinds of capital in societies. For Bourdieu, agents who own capital are in a relation of power with respect to those who do not own it. In the intellectual field, intellectuals are often in a good position in terms of their possession of cultural capital, which allows them to impose their own viewpoints and legitimising strategies to less well-placed agents in the field.

We must open here a parenthesis to further clarify what Bourdieu understands by 'intellectual field'. He first developed this concept in his essay from 1966, 'Intellectual field and creative project', where he provided a historical perspective, according to which the intellectual field in modern societies adopted its current structure after the nineteenth century. For Bourdieu, intellectual life throughout the Middle Ages and part of the Renaissance was dominated by the patronage of the aristocracy and the Church, which imposed their ethical and aesthetic values on writers, artists, and other agents in the field, conditioning the production of the work of art.<sup>35</sup> However, towards the nineteenth century, a series of changes in European societies allowed artists and writers to set free from external constraints in relation to their work. Although the cultural field became thus autonomous, the work of art also became subjected to a literary and artistic market, leading to the constitution of a body of properly intellectual professions in charge of producing the value of the work of art.<sup>36</sup> For Bourdieu, the intellectual field is thus a by-product of the autonomisation of the cultural field, which ultimately entailed the constitution of a body of experts in charge of producing the value of the work of art. It might seem that this body of experts would only include art critics, however Bourdieu understands the intellectual field as a structure that also involves academies, discussion and reading circles, educational systems, and to some extent, magazines. Bourdieu characterises the intellectual field in his 1966 text as follows:

The dynamic structure of the intellectual field is none other than the network of interactions between a plurality of forces. These may be isolated agents like the intellectual creator, or systems of agents like the educational systems, the academies or circles, defined, basically at any rate, both in their existence and their function, by the *position* they occupy in the intellectual field, and by the

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<sup>35</sup> Bourdieu, 'Intellectual field and creative project', p. 105.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

*authority*, more or less recognized, that is more or less forceful and more or less far-reaching and in all cases mediated by their interaction, which they exercise or claim to exercise over the public – both the prize and at the same time to some extent the empire of the competition for intellectual consecration and legitimacy.<sup>37</sup>

The agent in the intellectual field, whether an academy or a circle, is considered an authority in a position to legitimise, over the public, certain kind of works. They are, in Bourdieu's account, recognised as 'cultural guides or taste-makers'.<sup>38</sup>

In summary, the notion of intellectual field thus offers an insightful methodological guide for the study of *Punto de Vista*. Firstly, it allows us to understand the magazine as inserted in a particular field and, consequently, as an agent in constant interaction – of opposition or affinity – with other agents, whether magazines, universities or other intellectual groupings. Moreover, the tensions in relation to the different positions adopted by *Punto de Vista* in the intellectual field will be explored in this thesis as a central topic: the Punto de Vista group had, for instance, an oscillating relationship with universities and with politics, which were influenced to a great extent by the historical context. Secondly, the notion of intellectual field also gives us a notion of the kind of struggles that mattered for *Punto de Vista*: most of the discussions set forth by the magazine can be understood as battles for imposing a legitimate interpretation about culture, criticism, or political events. The pretension of imposing a legitimate point of view is exemplary of what Bourdieu understands as symbolic struggles. Lastly, the notion of field, which in Bourdieu's account has specific rules which govern its functioning, also allows us to understand the Argentine intellectual field as governed by specific rules of consecration and legitimisation, also determined by the flow of cultural capital amongst its agents.

One last clarifying point must be raised in respect to Bourdieu's ideas about the intellectual field. In an article from 1999, Bourdieu claimed that magazines are both structured and structuring agents of the intellectual field, meaning that they are determined by the established functioning of the field, but at the same time, they re-structure and re-

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 105. (Italics in the original).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

shape the field as they put forward cultural interventions.<sup>39</sup> He exemplified his point by mentioning the famous review directed by Jean-Paul Sartre *Les Temps Modernes*, a magazine that has been a world-renowned paradigm for intellectual reviews.<sup>40</sup> Following such an approach, I seek to understand how *Punto de Vista* was itself structured by the legitimate cultural notions available in Argentina at the time, namely what were the conditions of possibility of its emergence and its insertion in the Argentine intellectual field of the 1970s and 1980s. But, also, how *Punto de Vista* structured the intellectual field, namely, what were the contributions of the magazine to Argentine culture and its role within the intellectual field, a similar vein to Bourdieu's analysis of *Les Temps Modernes* as a main agent of the French intellectual field. It is to be noted here that one important contribution by *Punto de Vista* was, precisely, the introduction of Bourdieu's sociology of knowledge into the Argentine cultural field. Therefore, at the time that the editors of the magazine introduced a series of new concepts – those set forth by Bourdieu – to analyse Argentine culture, they were also exercising the role Bourdieu typically assigns to agents in the intellectual field, namely introducing theories and legitimising certain theoretical frameworks. I will examine this contribution in the first chapters of this thesis, taking into account this double sided aspect of Bourdieu's tenets in relation to *Punto de Vista*.

In regards to the second methodological question, that is, the study of magazines, I will briefly outline a definition of 'little magazine'. This term refers to a narrower spectrum of publications than the Spanish *revista*, which makes it a particularly accurate term to define *Punto de Vista*. In *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker outline the basic characteristics of little magazines, which they describe as 'often thought to be short-lived, committed to experiment, in constant financial difficulties, and indifferent or directly opposed to commercial considerations'.<sup>41</sup> They add that little magazines usually emerge from the

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<sup>39</sup> Bourdieu, 'Le Fonctionnement du champ intellectuel', p. 21.

<sup>40</sup> For an analysis of *Les Temps Modernes* that largely draws from Bourdieu's analytical principles, see Anna Boschetti, *The Intellectual Enterprise. Sartre and Les Temps Modernes* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1985).

<sup>41</sup> Brooker and Thacker, 'General introduction', p. 11.



margins of culture and promote innovation, against tradition and convention. They claim, furthermore, that the term ‘little’ does not refer to the size of the magazine, but rather, to its limited group of ‘intelligent readers’.<sup>42</sup> Lastly, drawing from Raymond Williams’ notion of ‘cultural formations’, they consider little magazines as an instance of groups or cenacles where artistic debates and social identities take place. Little magazines, thus, would typically embody cultural formations.<sup>43</sup> Brooker and Thacker take on board this definition of little magazines to refer to three different sets of publications, which they analyse, respectively, in their three-volume work: modernist little magazines from Great Britain (1880-1955), from North America (1894-1960), and from Europe (1880-1940).<sup>44</sup> Despite the difference in time and space, their definition of little review singularly captures the idea of magazine that the *Punto de Vista* group had in mind. In effect, *Punto de Vista* emerged from the margins of culture, it promoted the reception of innovative writers, and it was addressed to a specialised readership. In short, most of the characteristics of little magazines that Brooker and Thacker describe correspond to the features of *Punto de Vista*, with the exception that the Argentine magazine was not short-lived, in contrast to their claim, but was rather a long-lived magazine. This last feature, we must clarify, is also rather unusual in the Argentine context, in which little magazines have been commonly short-lived.<sup>45</sup>

The last methodological issue that arises in regards to little magazines is how to study them. It has been often pointed out that a main difficulty lies in the fact that little reviews are, in essence, addressed to a contemporary reader. In other words, as Spanish

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>44</sup> *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, ed. by Brooker and Thacker, 3 vols, I: Britain and Ireland 1880-1955 (2013), II: North America 1894-1960 (2016), III: Europe 1880-1940 (2016). For another recent work on modernist magazines see Eric Bulson, *Little Magazine, World Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

<sup>45</sup> A few examples of little reviews published along the same years as *Punto de Vista* are *El Ornitorrinco* (1977-1987), *Unidos* (1983-1991), *Controversia* (1978-1981), *La Bizca* (1985-1986), *Pie de Página* (1983-1985), and *Babel* (1988-1991). The list can be extended, but these examples show that little magazines in Argentina were rarely published for more than ten years. In Argentina’s cultural history there is, though, another little magazine that has been published for a long period time: *Sur* (1931-1970), the publication directed by Victoria Ocampo, and frequently associated with the names of Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares. The study of reference for *Sur* is John King, *Sur: A Study of the Argentine Literary Journal and its Role in the Development of a Culture, 1931-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

writer Guillermo de Torre once claimed, ‘la revista es vitrina y es cartel. El libro es en cierto modo un ataúd, quizás más duradero y perfecto, pero menos jugoso y vital.’<sup>46</sup> A magazine from the past usually conveys in its pages discussions (about politics, art, culture, criticism) that are meaningful only in relation to the context in which they appear. They are more vital than other formats, insofar as they host different viewpoints, subjects, registers, genres, and interests, but they are also more ephemeral. However, it is by virtue of the miscellaneous character of literary magazines and their insertion in contemporary debates that magazines are a particularly insightful subject of study. Not only it is possible to reconstruct a cultural climate through the pages of a little review, it is also possible to understand the history of a culture, that in which the review is inserted. Moreover, magazines can also be regarded as repositories of knowledge, for their articles might present ground-breaking theories that later develop into fundamental bibliographical texts. Some articles in *Punto de Vista*, as I will show in this thesis, are main bibliographical references in Latin American cultural studies today and it is likely that its editors were conscious that the magazine could become a bibliographical source and, at the same time, a promoter of contemporary debates.

This standpoint is along the lines of Veronica Delgado’s stance, who proposed, for example, that cultural historians must take into account certain aspects of little magazines in order to understand them as a ‘crucial dimension’ of cultural history and not as secondary in respect to other forms of culture.<sup>47</sup> Hence, Delgado outlines a series of elements which the cultural historian must take into account when analysing little magazines, such as the collective intervention which they set forth (as they are generally edited by a group of people with intellectual affinities), the sociability that is built around them, their edition and modes of circulation, the degree to which they include specialised literature, and the controversies established with other agents of the same field.<sup>48</sup> In a

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<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Francine Masiello, ‘Argentine Literary Journalism: The Production of a Critical Discourse’, *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1985), 27-60 (p. 27).

<sup>47</sup> Verónica Delgado, ‘Algunas cuestiones críticas y metodológicas en relación con el estudio de revistas’, in *Tramas impresas: Publicaciones periódicas argentinas (XIX-XX)*, ed. by V. Delgado, A. Mailhe, and G. Rogers (La Plata: Universidad Nacional de La Plata. Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, 2014), pp. 11-25 (p. 20).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24.

similar perspective, Annick Louis has also set forth methodological principles for the study of magazines as ‘autonomous objects’.<sup>49</sup> Louis warns us that by ‘autonomous object’ she does not mean that magazines should be studied independently from the context in which they were published or from the trajectories of their editors. She rather points out that the fact that magazines should not be studied as recipients of a given cultural context, but rather as agents that modify and transform the cultural context in which they are inserted. In Louis’ account, magazines must not be considered ‘un espacio donde se refleja la vida intelectual, sino donde se gesta: un espacio que permite aprehender las relaciones entre los agentes del campo (y no uno que las refleja).’<sup>50</sup> Therefore, both Louis and Delgado also propose methodological views from which to study magazines as autonomous objects, and as active agents of the cultural field.

Stemming from the definitions given above, we can now summarise some of the main features of *Punto de Vista* in its condition of little magazine as follows:

- a) It was a collective enterprise and, as such, it was a manifestation of the dispositions and affinities, the ‘structure of feeling’, as Williams would have put it, of a specific group of intellectuals.<sup>51</sup>
- b) It emerged from the margins of culture, as a magazine that challenged the predominant censorship of the period.
- c) It promoted innovation and maintained a critical view of tradition, but also of market-oriented cultural productions.
- d) It was addressed to a specialised readership.
- e) Its format and design expressed the aesthetic preferences of the group.
- f) It typically adopted an identifiable position in regards to political events.

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<sup>49</sup> Annick Louis, ‘Las revistas literarias como objeto de estudio’, in *Almacenes de un tiempo en fuga: revistas culturales en la modernidad hispánica*, ed. by Hanno Ehrlicher and Nanette Rissler-Pipka (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2014), pp. 31-57.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>51</sup> Williams coined the term ‘structures of feeling’ to refer to the world-view or ideology of ‘a generation or a period’. What Williams emphasised with ‘feeling’ is the idea that the beliefs of certain groups at a specific moment of history are not fully explained by ‘formally structured hypotheses of the social’. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 128-35.

Although the scholars mentioned above do not emphasise this last feature of little magazines, namely, the adoption of a political stance, it is not possible to study *Punto de Vista* without taking into account the political positioning its editors adopted, and which was usually conveyed in the editorial articles. I will consider this aspect of *Punto de Vista* as central, insofar as the political views adopted by the group played a decisive role in the positioning of the magazine within the intellectual field.

Hence, I will take into account these methodological questions, which present us with the challenge of exercising an interdisciplinary approach, for the study of a magazine as an autonomous object entails analysing the many aspects involved in its production, circulation and reception. This study consequently draws from a set of analytical tools – those set forth by Bourdieu, in relation to the intellectual field, and by Brooker, Thacker, Delgado and Louis, in regards to the study of little magazines – to shed light on the constitution of a relevant intellectual cohort in Argentina's recent history and its impact in the intellectual field.

### Literature review

Studies on cultural magazines from Latin America have multiplied in the past decades. The publication of several edited volumes that gather together articles about different twentieth-century Latin American magazines highlight the importance that little reviews have had in the development of culture during the past century at a continental level. Particularly relevant are the issues of the journal *América: Cahiers du CRICCAL* dedicated to Latin American cultural magazines, published between 1990 and 1996.<sup>52</sup> This seminal compilation of articles provides an ambitious overview of the many cultural projects intellectuals put forward through magazines across the region between 1919 and 1990. *Punto de Vista* was not analysed in these articles, however, the issues included two texts by its director, Beatriz Sarlo: one was about the Argentine magazine *Contra*, and the

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<sup>52</sup> The three volumes were the result of international conferences organised by the Centre de Recherches Interuniversitaires sur les Champs Culturels en Amérique Latine (CRICCAL) in 1987, 1990 and 1992. The published volumes are divided in three different periods (1919-1939, 1940-1970, and 1970-1990), each of them categorised in regions: Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, Venezuela and Colombia, Peru, Chile, and the River Plate region. *América: Cahiers du Criccal*, no. 4-5 (1990), no. 9-10 (1992), no. 15-16 (1996).

other was an essay about the motivations which led intellectuals, particularly in the River Plate region between the 1950s and the 1970s, to publish magazines.<sup>53</sup> This last piece by Sarlo was both an overview of the crossroads between cultural projects and magazines and a description, in the first person, of the making of a magazine, as Sarlo herself had been editor of the magazine *Los Libros* (1969-1976) as well as, later on, of *Punto de Vista*. Another relevant volume on Latin American magazines is *La cultura de un siglo. América latina en sus revistas*, edited by Saúl Sosnowski in 1999.<sup>54</sup> The almost forty articles about Latin American magazines published in this book are divided into broad topics which correspond to different periods of the twentieth century: ‘Modernidad y Vanguardia’, ‘Nacionalismo y Cosmopolitismo’, ‘Revolución y Crisis’, ‘Represión y Redemocratización’, ‘Construcción y Límites’. In this volume, *Punto de Vista* was analysed under the section, ‘Represión y Redemocratización’, in an article by Beatriz Sarlo, where she developed an account of the magazine’s origins and development from the editor’s viewpoint. Other recently published books that delve into twentieth-century Latin American magazines are *Revistas en América Latina: proyectos literarios, políticos y culturales*, edited by Regina Crespo in 2010, *Revistas culturales latinoamericanas 1960-2008*, edited by Lydia Elizalde in 2010, and *Almacenes de un tiempo en fuga*, edited by Hanno Ehrlicher and Nanette Rissler-Pipka in 2014.<sup>55</sup> The publication of these texts, which include articles about different magazines from Latin America grouped together according to different time frames, suggest the growth of magazine studies in Latin America and the relevance of this subject matter for the history of twentieth-century Spanish American culture. In particular, *Almacenes de un tiempo en fuga* comprises a consistent set of articles which provide theoretical guidelines for the study of little reviews, which, as seen in the previous paragraphs, I use here.

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<sup>53</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, ‘Contra: la modernidad de izquierda’, *América: Cahiers du Criccal*, no. 4-5 (1990), 369-80, and Beatriz Sarlo, ‘Intelectuales y revistas: razones de una práctica’, *América: Cahiers du Criccal*, no. 9-10 (1992), 9-16.

<sup>54</sup> As was the case of the issues of *América: Cahiers du CRICCAL*, the book edited by Sosnowski gathered together different articles about cultural magazines in Latin America, which had been previously presented as papers at a conference held in Buenos Aires in 1997.

<sup>55</sup> *Revistas en América Latina: proyectos literarios, políticos y culturales*, ed. by Regina Crespo (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma de México, 2010); *Almacenes de un tiempo en fuga*, ed. by Ehrlicher and Rissler-Pipka; and *Revistas culturales latinoamericanas 1960-2008*, ed. by Lydia Elizalde (Cuernavaca: Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos, 2010).

With regard to *Punto de Vista*, it must be acknowledged that the inclusion of Sarlo's article in *La cultura de un siglo* means that the magazine became a valid subject of scholarly analysis in the field of Latin American cultural magazines. However, the fact that it was Sarlo, and not an external reader, who studied the review showed that the academic interest in *Punto de Vista* was still at an early stage. Only a short number of articles on *Punto de Vista* had been published until then. The first article which considered *Punto de Vista* as a subject of study was a brief essay by John King published in *Literatura argentina hoy: de la dictadura a la democracia*, which accounted for the initial years of the magazine in relation to its main antecedent, *Los Libros*, and the cultural context of the 1970s.<sup>56</sup> Andrea Pagni also dedicated two articles to *Punto de Vista*, published in 1994 and 1996, respectively; the first analysed the new critical approaches set forth by Sarlo and Gramuglio in relation to the study of *Sur* and Borges in the pages of their magazine, and the second analysed the problems regarding the identity of leftist intellectuals in Argentina by looking into the articles published in *Punto de Vista*.<sup>57</sup> Roxana Patiño also dedicated an essay to the study of *Punto de Vista* in 1998, where she analysed the cultural and political changes brought about by the democratic transition, the reconfiguration of the intellectual field and the development of cultural magazines in Argentina. Patiño privileged in her article the study of *Punto de Vista* because it was the only publication which outlived both the dictatorship period and the democratic transition.<sup>58</sup> Patiño later extended her analysis of Argentine cultural magazines and intellectuals from the 1980s and 1990s in several works that provide an overview of the cultural and political debates of these two decades in the Southern Cone country. Although her later works are not

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<sup>56</sup> John King, 'Las revistas culturales de la dictadura a la democracia: el caso de "Punto de Vista"', in *Literatura argentina hoy: de la dictadura a la democracia*, ed. by Karl Kohut and Andrea Pagni (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 1989), pp. 87-94.

<sup>57</sup> Andrea Pagni, 'Relecturas de Borges y *Sur* por la izquierda intelectual argentina desde los años ochenta: el caso de *Punto de Vista*', *Actas del VII Congreso Nacional de Literatura Argentina* (Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, 1994), 459-65. Andrea Pagni, 'Repensar la izquierda en la Argentina democrática. *Punto de Vista. Revista de Cultura* (1978-1993)', *Nuevo Texto Crítico*, vol. 8, no. 16-17 (July 1995-June 1996), pp. 177-89.

<sup>58</sup> Roxana Patiño, '*Punto de Vista*, la persistencia de un debate', *Revista Interamericana de Bibliografía*, vol. 48, no.1 (1998), 159-62.

exclusively centred on *Punto de Vista*, they all consider it as a magazine of reference and she analyses it at length.<sup>59</sup>

Since the 2000s, *Punto de Vista* has been increasingly calling the attention of cultural historians, which is reflected in the proliferation of articles on the magazine. The two most comprehensive studies of *Punto de Vista* are the chapters that José Luis de Diego dedicated to *Punto de Vista* in his book *¿Quién de nosotros escribirá el Facundo? Intelectuales y Escritores en Argentina (1970-1986)*, and Mariano Plotkin and Ricardo González Leandri's article 'El regreso a la democracia y la consolidación de nuevas élites intelectuales. El caso de *Punto de Vista*. *Revista de cultura*. Buenos Aires (1978-1985)'.<sup>60</sup> De Diego's book, published in 2007, examines the literary and intellectual fields in Argentina between 1970 and 1986. He dedicates several parts of his work to the study of magazines published before and after the dictatorship. Although de Diego examines the intellectual and the literary field separately, he emphasizes discussions regarding literature and literary criticism throughout his book, and therefore stresses the role played by *Punto de Vista* in the literary field more than in the intellectual field. Secondly, Plotkin and González Leandri analyse the Argentine intellectual field during the democratic transition by looking into the 'strategies' set forth by *Punto de Vista* during this period.<sup>61</sup> This work offers an excellent overview of the consolidation of *Punto de Vista* as a publication of reference in Argentina, and the division of the article in the different strategies adopted by the magazine, such as the self-identification of the *Punto de Vista* group as a left-wing group of intellectuals, or the links the magazine established with intellectuals abroad, provides a fruitful analytical tool to study *Punto de Vista*.

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<sup>59</sup> See footnote 23 above. See also Roxana Patiño, *Narrativas políticas e identidades intelectuales en Argentina (1990-2000)*, Working Paper no. 10 (College Park, MD: Latin American Studies Centre, 2003); and Roxana Patiño, 'Revistas literarias y culturales argentinas de los 80: Usinas para pensar una época', *Ínsula*, no. 715-716 (2006), 2-5.

<sup>60</sup> José Luis de Diego, *¿Quién de nosotros escribirá el Facundo? Intelectuales y Escritores en Argentina (1970-1986)* (La Plata: Ediciones Al Margen, 2004). Mariano Plotkin and Ricardo González Leandri, 'El regreso a la democracia y la consolidación de nuevas élites intelectuales. El caso de *Punto de Vista*. *Revista de cultura*. Buenos Aires (1978-1985)', in *Localismo y globalización. Apuntes para una historia de los intelectuales en Iberoamérica*, ed. by Mariano Plotkin and Ricardo González Leandri (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000), pp. 217-40.

<sup>61</sup> Plotkin and González Leandri define 'strategies' as both the conscious calculations put in play by agents in the intellectual field to achieve certain goals, but also as the result of the agents' unconscious dispositions. Plotkin and González Leandri, p. 219.

The rest of the academic articles on *Punto de Vista* are mainly divided into essays that examine the reception of foreign theories, comparative articles, and essays that look into specific events in relation to the magazine. The group of articles on the reception of foreign theories mainly focus on *Punto de Vista*'s introduction of theories by Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu in its initial years.<sup>62</sup> As regards the second group of articles, *Punto de Vista* has been compared by Miguel Dalmaroni to magazines such as the Chilean *Revista de Crítica Cultural* and the Argentine *Confines*, by Martina Garategaray to *Unidos* and other magazines, and by Laura Maccioni to *La Ciudad Futura*.<sup>63</sup> Lastly, some articles can be classed together in a third group, such as Gustavo Vulcano's analysis of the literary discussions held in the pages of the magazine in the 1980s, and Diego Peller's article on the end of *Punto de Vista*.<sup>64</sup>

Lastly, the scholarship in English on *Punto de Vista* is scarce. Of recent publication, the book *Exile, Diaspora, and Return: Changing Cultural Landscapes in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay* dedicates a section to *Punto de Vista*.<sup>65</sup> This book looks into the transitions from authoritarian rule to democratization in different countries in the Southern Cone, and the different exiles of intellectuals, activists, and

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<sup>62</sup> See footnote 21 above. For the reception of Bourdieu in Argentina, in which the two founders of *Punto de Vista* Beatriz Sarlo and Carlos Altamirano played a decisive role see Ana Teresa Martínez, 'Lecturas y lectores de Bourdieu en la Argentina', *Prismas*, no. 11 (2007), 11-30; and Denis Baranger, 'La recepción de Bourdieu en Argentina y Brasil', *Desarrollo Económico*, vol. 50, no. 197 (April-June 2010), 129-46.

<sup>63</sup> Miguel Dalmaroni, 'Dictaduras, memorias y modos de narrar: *Confines*, *Punto de Vista*, *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, *H.I.J.O.S.*', *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 70, no. 208-209 (July-December 2004), 957-81. Dalmaroni's work focuses on discussions about the recent past presented in these magazines, which involved problems regarding the memory of the dictatorial period. See also Martina Garategaray, 'Democracia, intelectuales y política. *Punto de Vista*, *Unidos* y *La Ciudad Futura* en la transición política e ideológica de la década del 80', *Revista Estudios*, no. 29 (January-June 2013), 53-72; Martina Garategaray, 'Intelectuales en democracia: Los casos de *Unidos* y *Punto de Vista*', in *Trayectorias singulares, voces plurales: Intelectuales y política en la Argentina, siglos XIX-XX*, ed. by Mariano Di Pasquale and Marcelo Summo (Tres de Febrero: Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, 2015), pp. 229-55; and Laura Maccioni, 'Lenguaje, juegos de habla y construcción de un orden democrático: debates en *La Ciudad Futura* y *Punto de Vista* durante el período de la transición', *Andamios*, vol. 12, no. 27 (2015), 97-121.

<sup>64</sup> Gustavo Vulcano, 'Crítica, Resistencia y memoria en *Punto de Vista*. *Revista de Cultura*', *Orbis Tertius*, vol. 4, no. 7 (2000), 105-15. Diego Peller, 'El sentido de un final. Notas sobre el cierre de *Punto de Vista*', *El Matadero*, no. 9 (2015), 7-16.

<sup>65</sup> *Exile, Diaspora, and Return: Changing Cultural Landscapes in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay*, ed. by Luis Roniger and others (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017). Another account (in English) of Argentine magazines published under the dictatorship which dedicates a section to *Punto de Vista* is Cecily Marcus, 'The Molecular Intellectual: Cultural Magazines and Clandestine Life under Argentina's last dictatorship' (PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 2006).



academics. Therefore, in the study of the Argentine context, *Punto de Vista* is considered, by Luis Roniger in this book, a relevant vehicle of resistance to the military, and ‘one of the few open spaces for debate during the dictatorship’.<sup>66</sup>

In summary, the literature on *Punto de Vista* is abundant but rather fragmentary, and almost exclusively in Spanish. Although *Punto de Vista* has been recognised in Argentina as a central publication of the late twentieth century, it has given rise to more or less brief essays, rather than to a comprehensive study. As suggested, the most complete studies on the magazine are Plotkin and González Leandri’s article, and de Diego’s book; however, some important aspects of the development of *Punto de Vista* are not explored in detail in these works. For instance, although the relationship between the *Punto de Vista* group and the CCS – which is of great importance in terms of the ideological identities of these intellectuals – is mentioned, it is nonetheless analysed only very briefly.

Moreover, although much of the available literature on the magazine provides valuable keys to understand the main subjects analysed in *Punto de Vista* and the intellectual discussions held in its pages, they generally focus on the specific years of the democratic transition, and not on the larger time frame involving the cultural and political background of the group and their consecration as an intellectual elite after the transition to democracy. It is my aim to put forward in this thesis an analysis of the transformation of the group within a larger time span, from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, by looking into the specific discussions held at different periods, but also into the development of the group as a whole, taking into account the incorporations and divisions of the members of the magazine, and the different political positions that defined their trajectories. Drawing on primary research in the form of interviews with the intellectuals who participated in and contributed to *Punto de Vista*, and, also, in the form of new material from personal and public archives, I will provide a first comprehensive account of the development of the magazine and the generation of intellectuals associated with it.

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<sup>66</sup> Luis Roniger, ‘Surviving Authoritarianism, Contributing to the Agenda of Democratization’, in *Exile, Diaspora, and Return*, ed. by Roniger and others, pp. 140-65 (p. 141).

## Outline

This thesis is divided into two main parts and six chapters, which follow a chronological order. The first three chapters, which correspond to the first part, analyse the antecedents of *Punto de Vista* and its emergence during the military dictatorship of 1976-1983. The last three chapters, which correspond to the second part, focus on the democratic transition and the development of the magazine from 1983 to 1993. Chapter 1 provides a cultural context of the 1960s, a decade of great cultural development in the country, and of the early 1970s, a period marked by the politicisation of intellectuals. This is a key period in relation to the intellectuals gathered around *Punto de Vista* as most of them were considerably influenced by the cultural climate of the 1960s and 1970s, which ultimately constituted a formative period on which they will not cease to reflect in the following decades. This chapter also includes an analysis of a magazine that was *Punto de Vista*'s most direct antecedent: *Los Libros*. This little review was, in its final years, directed by Altamirano, Piglia and Sarlo, who later decided to publish *Punto de Vista* based on the experience they had acquired as *Los Libros*' editors.

Chapters 2 and 3 analyse, respectively, the first two periods of *Punto de Vista*. Chapter 2 covers the years 1978 to 1981, when the magazine was first published and delineated its main features and topics of interest. During these years, politics were completely absent from the pages of the review, as the ongoing repression and cultural censorship in Argentina made it impossible for these intellectuals to raise their voices on these topics. However, the *Punto de Vista* group set out to revise the Argentine literary and intellectual tradition in this period, in articles that essayed new ways of studying culture, advancing a renovation of cultural criticism by introducing cultural studies, scantily known until then in Argentina. Chapter 3 analyses the second period of *Punto de Vista*, which spans 1981 to 1983. During these years, the risks of putting forward political opinions decreased as the military dictatorship was losing its grip on power, and the editors of *Punto de Vista* gave the magazine a more political nuance. They strongly opposed the Falklands/Malvinas War and they established a close connection with a group of Argentine intellectuals living in Mexico as political exiles. During this second period, *Punto de Vista* began to be recognised as a publication of reference.

Chapter 4 provides a cultural context of the democratic transition, a key period of Argentina's recent history. During these years, the cultural and intellectual fields in Argentina began to recompose and many intellectuals living in exile returned to the country. Important political and social transformations took place during this period, the trial against the military juntas being a key event of the transition, and a central topic of the magazine during that period. This chapter also focuses on the constitution of the CCS, as this organisation has been a fundamental episode in the intellectual trajectory of the Punto de Vista group. Chapter 5 analyses how the new changes brought about by the democratic transition influenced the development of the magazine. It was a period of sheer optimism, which the articles published in *Punto de Vista* conveyed at length. The magazine took on the task of reflecting on the memory of the recent past, but it also held a forward-looking stance, insofar as it proposed new ways of understanding the role of intellectuals and promoted the adoption of new political theories. Lastly, Chapter 6 sets out to analyse a period of crisis for intellectuals in Argentina. These were the years of consolidation of neoliberalism in the country and the emergence of new forms of communication in which mass media played a decisive role. The optimism of the early 1980s turned into pessimism in the early 1990s, a transformation that resounded in the articles and essays published in *Punto de Vista*.

The historical trajectory of the Punto de Vista group will, thus, be the thread guiding the analysis I put forward, for what matters in this thesis are the breaks and continuities, the scope and limits, of the representations, ideologies and points of view sustained by this generation of Argentine intellectuals.

## PART ONE

### Chapter 1: The cultural background

Quien en aquellos años conoció la esperanza ya no la olvida: la sigue buscando entre todos los cielos, entre todos los hombres, entre todas las mujeres.<sup>1</sup>

In his 2017 book, *Una lectura: una vida*, literary critic Daniel Link evokes his relationship with Leopoldo Sosa Pujato, director of Centro Cultural Rojas, a cultural institution founded in 1984 during the democratic transition in Argentina: ‘Leopoldo nos enseñó (a quienes no habíamos vivido el Di Tella, ni la Facultad de la calle Viamonte) a leer una sensibilidad, un clima y a crear un ambiente.’<sup>2</sup> The parenthetical remark reveals much about the generational gap between Link – who was born in 1959 – and older intellectual figures, for the Institute Di Tella and the building on Viamonte street (where the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Buenos Aires was located) represented the two most important hubs for artistic and intellectual activity during the 1960s.<sup>3</sup> While in the 1960s, young, middle-class *porteños*, inhabitants of the city of Buenos Aires, were able to experience the substantial changes taking place within the cultural milieu – which gave rise to the emergence of conceptual art, the growth and consolidation of psychoanalysis, and the explosion of the editorial industry – twenty years later, the generation of people who were in their twenties during the 1980s, such as Link, had to

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<sup>1</sup> Oscar Terán, *Nuestros años sesentas* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2013), p. 246.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Link, *Una lectura: una vida* (Buenos Aires: Ampersand, 2017), p. 132.

<sup>3</sup> The two main works of reference with regard to Argentine intellectuals in the 1960s are Terán, *Nuestros años sesentas* and Silvia Sigal, *Intelectuales y poder en la década del sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Puntosur, 1991). Although both books establish a similar periodisation – they consider the 1960s to span from 1955 to 1966 – and a similar subject of study, they present some differences. While Terán’s book is written in an autobiographical style and traces the different debates and controversies in the intellectual field during this period, Sigal’s book presents a sociological point of view from which to study, in particular, the conflictive relation between what she calls – drawing from Bourdieu’s postulates – the ‘intellectual field’ and the ‘political field’ in Argentina. Although Sigal sets out to study the changes experienced by the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) in this period, Terán’s book studies more in detail the ongoing discussions at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at UBA. In regards to the Di Tella Institute, the study of reference is John King, *El Di Tella y el desarrollo cultural argentino en la década del sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Asunto Impreso, 2007).

settle for limited, and often underground, cultural experiences, frequently stymied in a particularly repressive period (1976-1983). In other words, the changes within the cultural context experienced since 1976, when the last military coup was launched, denote a before and an after point in the Argentine cultural field. In 1976, the military installed a system of state repression by implementing strict cultural and political censorship, the prosecution of everyone suspected of ‘subversion’, as well as the clandestine and illegal detention, torture and killing of political activists.<sup>4</sup> Although authoritarianism had not been uncommon throughout Argentine history, the 1976 dictatorship abruptly disrupted people’s everyday lives, and completely transformed and largely silenced the cultural and intellectual fields in Argentina.

The magazine *Punto de Vista* was one of the few publications that defied the censorship of the dictatorship. The review did not, at first, overtly oppose the military government; it quietly emerged in the interstices of a censorship system that, while powerful and all-encompassing, did not reach marginal publications.<sup>5</sup> Although the founding editors of *Punto de Vista*, Carlos Altamirano, Ricardo Piglia, and Beatriz Sarlo, were fairly young when the review was first published in 1978 (all were under forty), they had experienced, to use Link’s expression, the times of the Di Tella and the building in Viamonte street. Beatriz Sarlo, the director of the magazine, has referred to these institutions as ‘centres of modernisation’, which were central to her personal, and formative, experience of the 1960s:

Diría que es importante considerar este centro que era la universidad, porque estaba unido – hasta física y espacialmente – con otro centro de modernización, el Instituto Di Tella. Podría pensarse en una continuidad espacial, que abarcaba las calles que van desde Viamonte a Charcas con Florida como eje. Con lo cual, no es nada extraño imaginar (esta fue mi experiencia personal) que había una especie de tránsito – en el sentido más físico de la palabra – desde la biblioteca de la facultad, donde uno depositaba

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<sup>4</sup> Novaro and Palermo, *La dictadura militar*, pp. 19-33.

<sup>5</sup> The most relevant study of cultural censorship under the dictatorship remains Andrés Avellaneda, *Censura, autoritarismo y cultura. Argentina 1960-1983* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1986).

largas horas de su vida, hasta los ‘eventos’ que se iban organizando en el instituto Di Tella.<sup>6</sup>

As Sarlo’s quotation suggests, these institutions (these ‘centres of modernisation’) exerted a great influence on her and, indeed, her generation. It is therefore necessary to provide an overview of the main cultural and political debates of the 1960s and 1970s, because, on the one hand, the editors of *Punto de Vista* began to shape their intellectual identities during these years. As Link’s quotation indicates, the times of the Di Tella and the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters represented a seminal moment in the development of their character. On the other hand, because *Punto de Vista* was, especially during the transition to democracy, a platform from which its editors revised and reflected on their own experience of the 1960s and 1970s, establishing a constant dialogue with their past. Hence, the following pages will analyse the social, cultural and political background of the editors in relation to the context of the 1960s and 1970s. Particular attention will be paid to the political discussions of the period; the cultural significance of the Di Tella Institute; the little magazines from the 1960s and the 1970s that influenced the editors of *Punto de Vista* in their youth; and the role played by two important publishing houses: Jorge Álvarez Editor and Centro Editor de América Latina (CEAL). In Bourdieu’s terminology, these were all significant agents of the Argentine cultural and intellectual fields of the period. Later, I will examine the experience of *Los Libros*, a magazine that is the most direct antecedent of *Punto de Vista*.

### From cultural modernisation to the politicisation of intellectuals

The period under scrutiny cannot be analysed without paying attention to two major political problems that characterised Argentina’s twentieth century: the instability of democracy, and the emergence and consolidation of Peronism.<sup>7</sup> From the 1930s,

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<sup>6</sup> John King, ‘Beatriz Sarlo’ [Interview] in King, *El Di Tella*, pp. 419-25 (p. 420). Another autobiographical account of the 1960s intellectual milieu of Buenos Aires can be found in Ricardo Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, II: *Los años felices* (2016).

<sup>7</sup> There is a vast bibliography on Peronism, since historians and sociologists have ceaselessly tried to uncover the nature and origins of this Argentine populism. The initial attempts to analyse the origins of *peronismo* from a sociological point of view were Gino Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época en transición* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1966) and Miguel Murmis and Juan Carlos Portantiero, *Estudios sobre los orígenes del Peronismo* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1971). Later on, Halperín Donghi produced a study

Argentina's political life had been marked by instability and the alternation between democratically elected governments and military dictatorships: the coup d'état that overthrew President Hipólito Yrigoyen in 1930 was later followed by several other coups, in 1943, 1955, 1962, 1966 and 1976. Only after 1983, when the last military dictatorship came to an end, would democracy become firmly re-established in the country, and, as a consequence, would the long-standing obstacle of Argentina's cycles of military governments be surmounted. Second, the emergence and consolidation of Peronism towards the 1940s significantly shaped the political landscape, and marked political alignments until this day. The question of Peronism is central to the enduring political and cultural discussions that have played out in Argentina during the second half of the twentieth century; I therefore present a brief overview of the development of Peronism, from its emergence in 1945 until the 1976 military coup.

During his two consecutive presidencies (1946-1952 and 1952-1955), Perón introduced a number of reforms that greatly benefited the working classes, creating what Halperín Donghi called a 'social revolution', which entailed the transformation of class relations in Argentine society.<sup>8</sup> This, combined with the leader's great charisma, sealed the long-lasting alliance between Peronism and workers' unions in Argentina. The inclusion of the poor, immigrants and workers (the 'cabecitas negras', as Perón's wife, the equally charismatic Evita, used to call them) in the body politic as recognised actors was, however, accompanied by an anti-imperialist, nationalist and industrialist rhetoric that has remained a distinctive characteristic of Peronism until today. In the view of many, Perón had given voice to a vast number of voiceless Argentines: 'Pueblo y nación' became the identity formula of Peronism. At the same time, Perón confronted the elites, but merely at a rhetorical level, which, combined with his populist style, his close ties with fascist leaders in Europe, and the authoritarianism that characterised his government, led to the

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of Peronism, including its variant in the 1990s, *menemismo* (named after Carlos Menem, the Peronist President who governed Argentina between 1989 and 1999), in Tulio Halperín Donghi, *La larga agonía de la Argentina peronista* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1994). In English, a summary of scholarly debates on Peronism can be found in Mariano Plotkin, 'The changing perceptions of Peronism: a review essay', in *Peronism and Argentina*, ed. by James P. Brennan (Wilmington: SR Books, 1998), pp. 25-54.

<sup>8</sup> Halperín Donghi, *La larga agonía de la Argentina peronista*, pp. 26-27.

fierce opposition of liberal elites and a considerable part of the political spectrum.<sup>9</sup> To give an example of the tense relations between Perón and cultural elites, Victoria Ocampo, founder of *Sur* magazine (1931-1970) and one of the most influential cultural figures of her time, was imprisoned in 1953 for twenty-six days for overtly opposing Perón's regime.<sup>10</sup> Friends of Ocampo, the writers Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares, had also expressed their repulsion to Peronism in a short story, 'La fiesta del monstruo', in which they allegorically, but also very crudely, criticised Perón and his followers.<sup>11</sup> This short story became an eloquent example of the rejection of liberal elites to the new popular movement.

In hindsight, Perón's movement re-launched a binary discourse that has defined Argentine culture until today, and can be traced back to the nineteenth century: the opposition between civilisation and barbarism, popularised in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo*, one of the founding texts of Argentine literature.<sup>12</sup> While, in the eyes of his opponents, Perón was bringing barbarism to the fore, Peronists believed that he was defending Argentina's true national interests while also speaking for the people. Far from compatible, these two perspectives were exclusive and exhaustive, since Peronism 'divided Argentine society into two irreconcilable sectors'.<sup>13</sup> Even a vast sector of the military, to which Perón had belonged, strongly opposed his regime, and ultimately

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<sup>9</sup> An overview of the different influences, from fascism to left-wing movements, on Perón's ideas and discourse, and the ideological variations and impact of Peronist nationalism in Argentina is David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History and Its Impact* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, the letter Victoria Ocampo sent to Albert Camus and other writers in Europe after she was released from prison, which has been recently re-discovered and partially published in Nino Ramella, 'Victoria Ocampo, presa política: la carta desconocida sobre su cautiverio', *La Nación*, 17 June 2015, <<https://www.lanacion.com.ar/1802356-victoria-ocampo-presa-politica-la-carta-desconocida-sobre-su-cautiverio>> [accessed 25 April 2018].

<sup>11</sup> Although 'La fiesta del monstruo' was written in 1947, that is, a few years after Perón came into power, it was only published in September 1955 in the Uruguayan magazine *Marcha*, under the name of Bustos Domecq H., one of the pseudonyms Borges and Bioy Casares typically used for pieces that they wrote together. H. Bustos Domecq, 'La fiesta del monstruo', *Marcha*, no. 783 (30 September 1955), 20-23.

<sup>12</sup> For a comprehensive study of Argentina's two historical pantheons, the liberal and the revisionist, on which this binary discourse was based see Michael Goebel, *Argentina's Partisan Past. Nationalism and the Politics of History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Mariano Plotkin, *Mañana es San Perón: A Cultural History of Perón's Argentina*, trans. by Keith Zahniser (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003), p. x. Plotkin's book focuses on the symbols and political imaginary of Peronism in order to explain the consensus and opposition built around this political movement in Argentina.



launched a coup that overthrew him in September 1955. The ‘Revolución Libertadora’, as the coup was called, aimed at eradicating Peronism once and for all, as it banned the Peronist Party for eighteen years, until 1973. However, Perón maintained his influence in Argentine politics from exile, to the point that one of the few elected Presidents of the period, Arturo Frondizi (who served as President between 1958 and 1962), could only win the elections with the implicit support of the ‘tirano prófugo’, as Perón’s detractors called him.<sup>14</sup> The ban on Peronism ultimately revealed the extent to which the military elites and their allies mistrusted the capacity of democratic mechanisms to solve social disputes, and the degree to which they exercised a tutelage over Argentine society. Nonetheless, the military miscalculated the results of the ban on Peronism: rather than curtailing Perón’s power, the proscription only increased the people’s identification with their former leader. Even an organised group of supporters, the ‘resistencia peronista’, emerged after 1955 in order to maintain the cohesion of Peronist groups while the leader was in exile.<sup>15</sup>

In the midst of this tumultuous period of unstable democracy, the Argentine economy continued to expand at the beginning of the 1960s, partially thanks to the *desarrollista* program implemented by President Arturo Frondizi, which promoted the development of the industrial sector.<sup>16</sup> This was a time of modernisation in numerous areas: not only were industries refashioned, but culture, too, in its various aspects, experienced a marked renewal. At the same time, Argentina’s middle class became an increasingly important political actor, and, as a consequence, consumerism, advertising and a wide range of cultural activities grew. These were also the years in which the middle classes from Buenos Aires started to visit psychoanalysts in large numbers, flocked to

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<sup>14</sup> For an overview of the ‘Revolución Libertadora’ see Luis Alberto Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, trans. by James Brennan (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), pp. 131-71.

<sup>15</sup> For a history of the *resistencia peronista* which focuses on the role of unions see Daniel James, *Resistance and integration: Peronism and the Argentine working class, 1946-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). The documentary *Los resistentes*, dir. by Alejandro Fernández Mouján (El perro en la luna, 2009) is also a valuable source for the study of the phenomenon of the Peronist resistance.

<sup>16</sup> A comprehensive study of the *desarrollismo* program led by Frondizi and his Ministry of Economy, Rogelio Frigerio – who had been in charge of convincing Perón to lend his support to Frondizi’s candidacy – is Celia Szusterman, *Frondizi and the Politics of Developmentalism in Argentina, 1955-62* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993).

screenings of Ingmar Bergman's films, and helped to create a 'boom' in literature.<sup>17</sup> A great number of high-quality magazines were published, and several important publishing houses were either created or settled in Buenos Aires.<sup>18</sup>

One of the most representative institutions of the 1960s cultural modernisation was the Di Tella Institute, founded in 1958 as a result of an initiative by Guido and Torcuato Di Tella, the well-educated sons of an important industrial entrepreneur, who aimed to establish an institution for the development of Argentine arts, sciences and culture at an international level. The most visible and controversial branch of the Institute was the Centre for Visual Arts, which awarded prestigious prizes to artists each year, and promoted artistic movements that were in vogue worldwide, such as happenings, op art and pop art.<sup>19</sup> An important cohort of now-renowned figures of Argentine culture received scholarships from the Institute's centres in the 1960s, such as the artists Marta Minujín, León Ferrari, Antonio Berni, Antonio Seguí, Juan Carlos Distéfano, Jorge de la Vega, Julio Le Parc and Gyula Kosice; musicians Gerardo Gandini and the band Les Luthiers; historians Tulio Halperín Donghi and Ezequiel Gallo; and political scientists Natalio Botana and Juan Carlos Torre.<sup>20</sup> Most of these artists and scholars have attained a global reputation throughout their careers, many of which were forged in the years of the Di Tella Institute.

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<sup>17</sup> John King, 'The influence of British culture in Argentina', in *The Land That England Lost: Argentina and Britain, a Special Relationship*, ed. by Alistair Hennessy and John King (London: British Academy Press, 1992), pp. 159-72 (p.169).

<sup>18</sup> Silvia Sigal, in her work on Argentine intellectuals, has highlighted the importance for the Argentine cultural context of the 1960s the foundation of the publishing house Eudeba within the orbit of the University of Buenos Aires, and the proliferation of new magazines, such as *Contorno*, *Centro*, *Cuestiones de Filosofía*, *Situación*, *Soluciones*, *El Popular*, *Che*, *Cuadernos de Cultura*, *Mar Dulce*, *Gaceta Literaria*, *Plática*, *Nueva Expresión*, *Hoy en la Cultura*, *El Grillo de Papel*, and *La Rosa Blindada*. Sigal, p. 86, 129.

<sup>19</sup> Guido Di Tella, one of the Institute's founders, claimed in regards to the state of the arts in Argentina that 'hicimos impresionismo cuando éste había terminado en Europa; hicimos cubismo un par de décadas más tarde, pero hicimos arte geométrico poco después y algunos dicen que un poco antes que en Europa; hicimos informalismo dos o tres años después y el movimiento pop dos o tres horas después'. Quoted in Andrea Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política en los años sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2001), p. 133.

<sup>20</sup> 'Historia. Instituto Di Tella', Universidad Torcuato Di Tella <<https://www.utdt.edu/>> [accessed 10 September 2017].



founders of *Punto de Vista* and a member of the Communist Party in the 1960s, *Primera Plana* was a magazine that intelligent people had to read, even if it was politically objectionable:

Si vos te considerabas una persona lista sabías que *Primera Plana* era una revista que te enseñaba una manera más sofisticada de entender las cosas, todas las cosas, la política y obviamente también las cosas relativas a la cultura. Pero a los ojos de la izquierda *Primera Plana* significaba algo así como una modernización burguesa cuyos frutos no necesariamente eran los frutos que debían esperarse de una lectura adecuada de la cultura, de la literatura, etc. Entonces era una relación ambivalente, no se podía dejar de leer *Primera Plana*, pero no creías que fuera la fuente de la verdad a la cual vos tenías que aferrarte.<sup>22</sup>

Altamirano's words express the position that many young leftist intellectuals espoused with regard to these vehicles of cultural modernisation: while they considered the *Di Tella* and *Primera Plana* influential and relevant, even indispensable, they maintained a certain ideological distance, since they could also regard them as bourgeois, even frivolous. The group of politicised intellectuals in which Altamirano participated as a young member has been named by Oscar Terán 'denuncialistas', a term that refers to intellectuals who gave rise to a new, denunciatory and critical left in Argentina between 1956 and 1966.<sup>23</sup> The denuncialistas, and one of the magazines that most influenced them, *Contorno* (1953-1959), contested the liberal and anti-Peronist tradition that had dominated the cultural field in Argentina until then.<sup>24</sup> In the pages of *Contorno*, Borges, Bioy Casares and Victoria Ocampo – representative figures of the liberal tradition embodied in *Sur* – were criticised, and long-time disregarded areas of Argentine literature were rediscovered and reassessed. Moreover, *Contorno* explored, adopted and disseminated contemporary theories – such as psychosocial theories and the lessons of Sartre – and applied them to canonical figures of Argentine literature, ultimately forging a new kind of criticism.<sup>25</sup> The adoption of Sartre's existentialism and theory of intellectual commitment by *Contorno*

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Carlos Altamirano (Buenos Aires, 16 July 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Terán, *Nuestros años sesentas*, p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> *Contorno* was published between 1953 and 1959 in Buenos Aires and its contributors were Ramón Alcalde, Tulio Halperín Donghi, Noé Jitrik, Adolfo Prieto, León Rozitchner, Juan José Sebreli, and the two founders, David and Ismael Viñas. For a comprehensive study of *Contorno* see William Katra, *Contorno: Literary Engagement in Post-Peronist Argentina* (London: Associated University Press, 1987).

<sup>25</sup> Masiello, 'Argentine Literary Journalism', p. 38.

implied that the writer and the intellectual had to involve themselves in the social and political issues of their time, a maxim whose influence on the young middle classes from Buenos Aires during the 1960s and 1970s was profound.<sup>26</sup> Another important dimension of the cultural program set forth by *Contorno* is that they rejected the anti-Peronism of traditional elites, without becoming, however, fully Peronists. As William Katra has asserted, though many members of *Contorno* were ‘repulsed by Perón’s politics of corruption, they nevertheless identified strongly with his nationalist and anti-imperialist rhetoric’.<sup>27</sup> *Contorno* thus became a paradigmatic review of modern intellectuals who admired Sartre and rejected the cultural legacy of older generations. The web of social relations formed around the magazine also represented distinctive intellectual collaboration and camaraderie, after which this group of people became known as the ‘Contorno generation’ or the ‘generation of 1955’.<sup>28</sup> Although the editors of *Punto de Vista* were younger than the members of *Contorno*, and therefore had not read the magazine when it was published in the 1950s, they were greatly influenced by this generation. In the view of Sarlo:

Los que éramos mucho más jóvenes que ellos, de todas maneras, somos arrastrados por esa ola, y pensamos que la gran pregunta es cómo escribir de nuevo las páginas del peronismo en la historia argentina. [...] La cosa pasaba más bien por un proyecto de inspiración contorneana, aunque tampoco había leído *Contorno*. Había sí leído *Literatura argentina y realidad política* [de David Viñas]; salía entonces de un *Contorno* aprendido en los Viñas, en Adolfo Prieto, en Jitrik.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, in the late 1960s, the founders of *Punto de Vista* became acquainted with some members of *Contorno*. Ricardo Piglia, for example, became friends with David Viñas, a leading figure of the *Contorno* group; Piglia was at that time the precocious young star of Argentine letters, having won the prestigious literary prize awarded by the Cuban Casa

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<sup>26</sup> Katra, *Contorno*, pp. 29-37.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> Masiello, ‘Argentine Literary Journalism’, p. 37. For another analysis of *Contorno* as an intellectual generation see Beatriz Sarlo, ‘Los dos ojos de *Contorno*’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 13 (November 1981), 3-8.

<sup>29</sup> Roy Hora and Javier Trímboli, ‘Beatriz Sarlo’ [Interview], in *Pensar la Argentina. Los historiadores hablan de historia y política*, ed. by Roy Hora and Javier Trímboli (Buenos Aires: El Cielo por Asalto / Imago Mundi, 1994), pp. 162-96 (p. 165).

de las Américas for his collection of short stories, *Jaulario*, in 1967.<sup>30</sup> This recognition granted him a modest fame in the intellectual coteries of Buenos Aires, and he subsequently established a close friendship with Viñas and other ‘contornistas’, a relationship that is very well documented in the second volume of his recently published diaries, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi: Los años felices (1966-1976)* (the title reveals much about the author’s appreciation of those years).<sup>31</sup>

Lastly, another relevant feature of the period was the growth of the editorial market, which reflected the concomitant growth of the lettered public. Although Argentina had enjoyed a solid editorial market since 1938, book sales increased significantly from the mid-1960s.<sup>32</sup> At a continental level, this period was characterised by a ‘boom’ in literature, due to the spectacular success of writers such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez. In 1967, for example, García Márquez’ *Cien Años de Soledad* was first published by Sudamericana in Buenos Aires, selling hundreds of thousands of copies in the first months.<sup>33</sup> Another editorial symbol of the period in Argentina was the publishing house Jorge Álvarez Editor, founded in 1963, within which many writers published some of the most important texts of the period. This was certainly the case with David Viñas’ *Literatura argentina y realidad política* (1964), a collection of his early essays on Argentine cultural history, which quickly became an influential book of literary criticism.<sup>34</sup> In addition, Jorge Álvarez published Manuel Puig’s first novel, *La Traición de Rita Hayworth*, in 1968. Thereafter, and especially following the publication of his second novel, *Boquitas Pintadas* (1969),

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<sup>30</sup> Jorge Fonet, ‘Prólogo’, in *Ricardo Piglia: Al cuidado de Jorge Fonet*, ed. by Jorge Fonet (Bogotá: Casa de las Américas, 2000), pp. 9-16 (p. 9).

<sup>31</sup> The ambiguous relationship between Piglia and Viñas, which on Piglia’s side oscillates between admiration and jealousy, is documented in these diaries. See Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, II.

<sup>32</sup> José Luis de Diego, ‘La edición de literatura en la Argentina de fines de los sesenta’, *Cuadernos LIRICO*, no. 15 (2016) <<http://lirico.revues.org/3147>> [accessed 28 August 2017].

<sup>33</sup> King, ‘The influence of British culture in Argentina’, p. 169. A taste of the thriving cultural milieu of Buenos Aires in the 1960s can be found in the special issue edited by John King of the *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 31, no. 4 (October 2012), which was dedicated to Tomás Eloy Martínez, writer and editor of the influential weekly *Primera Plana*, and one of the main promoters of boom writers in Argentina.

<sup>34</sup> A study of David Viñas’ book on criticism is Marcela Croce, ‘Constantes ideológicas con variaciones retóricas. Versiones y reediciones de la crítica de David Viñas’, in *Políticas de la crítica. Historia de la crítica literaria en la Argentina*, ed. by Nicolás Rosa (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2009), pp. 117-46.

Puig became one of the finest Argentine writers of the period, and another representative of the literary boom.<sup>35</sup> Álvarez also sponsored the initial books of Rodolfo Walsh (who also worked at the publishing house as editor), Juan José Saer and Ricardo Piglia, amongst others. Moreover, the bookstore that was associated with the publishing house, located in downtown Buenos Aires, constituted a space for social contact between the main writers and intellectuals of Buenos Aires until 1969, when it closed its doors.

The flourishing cultural environment of the early 1960s was partially interrupted in 1966, when a new coup overthrew President Arturo Illia, who had taken office in 1963 as leader of the Radical Party, the largest political organisation opposed to the Peronist Party. Led by General Juan Carlos Onganía, the coup installed what Guillermo O'Donnell has called the first Bureaucratic Authoritarian State in Argentina, a novel type of military rule, which shared parallels with the 1976 dictatorship.<sup>36</sup> Onganía's dictatorship, the so-called 'Revolución Argentina' (1966-1973), sought to exclude politically active sectors of society, such as workers' unions, and a group that was on the political rise: university students. As O'Donnell has argued, the main goal of Onganía's regime was to establish an economic and social order from which the upper strata of the middle sectors and the upper bourgeoisie would benefit. Political repression was necessary in order to achieve the Bureaucratic Authoritarian State's goals, and one of the first measures taken by the government was an intervention at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). In July 1966, a group of military men broke into the University's main buildings, beating students and professors who were protesting against the new government, in an episode that was remembered as 'La noche de los bastones largos'.<sup>37</sup> As a consequence, many professors, as well as a number of other figures, were either fired or resigned from their posts. It

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<sup>35</sup> For a biography of Manuel Puig see Suzanne Levine, *Manuel Puig and the Spider Woman: His Life and Fictions* (London: Faber, 2000).

<sup>36</sup> O'Donnell defines the Bureaucratic Authoritarian State as a regime led by the alliance between the military and the upper bourgeoisie with the intention of deactivating and excluding politically active sectors of society. For O'Donnell, the Bureaucratic Authoritarian State attempts to restore order and normalise the economy in order to favour the capital accumulation of private capital and some state institutions. In order to do so, the Bureaucratic Authoritarian State generally closes the democratic channels of access to government and for the representation of popular and working-class interest. Guillermo O'Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina 1966-1973 in Comparative Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 31-33.

<sup>37</sup> Romero, *A History of Argentina*, p. 174.

signified the end of the UBA's most creative and successful period. The Centre of Visual Arts of the Di Tella Institute was also subjected to political censorship in 1968, when Onganía attempted to close it a number of times, as the military regime considered the abstract and conceptual art exhibitions at the Di Tella to be 'subversive and communist'.<sup>38</sup> The ground-breaking Centre of Visual Arts was finally closed a couple of years later, in 1970, due to financial problems.

The 1960s cultural modernisation was followed by the increasing politicisation of working and educated middle classes. As Claudia Gilman has underscored in her book *Entre la pluma y el fusil*, the changes taking place from the 1960s to the 1970s were marked by the valorisation of politics and the expectations of a future socialist revolution.<sup>39</sup> In the intellectual field, political disputes, which had been on the rise since the late-1950s within certain intellectual sectors – as described in Contorno's case – started to dominate intellectual and cultural debates, to the point where cultural analysis was progressively subordinated to political affiliations. This is what Beatriz Sarlo has called 'the cannibalisation of culture by politics', meaning that politics began to overshadow cultural analysis.<sup>40</sup> The turning point of this politicisation was the *cordobazo*, a massive riot that brought together students and industrial workers in Córdoba, the second largest city in Argentina, in May 1969. The several strikes and popular protests, which lasted two days, demonstrated the astonishing power of the masses and the inability of the police to contain the riots. As a result, the *cordobazo* demolished the myth of order and authority that Onganía attempted to impose.<sup>41</sup> In this context, the Argentine left – influenced also by the Cuban and Chinese Revolutions, and by the many uprisings of students, workers and intellectuals across the world – grew considerably in number between 1969 and 1976, and an entire cohort of intellectuals, including those who later created *Punto de Vista*, began to participate in left-wing organisations.<sup>42</sup> For instance,

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<sup>38</sup> King, *El Di Tella*, p. 218.

<sup>39</sup> Claudia Gilman, *Entre la pluma y el fusil. Debates y dilemas del escritor revolucionario en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2003), p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, 'Intelectuales, ¿escisión o mimesis?', *Punto de Vista*, no. 25 (December 1985), 1-6.

<sup>41</sup> O'Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism*, p.160.

<sup>42</sup> See Claudia Hilb and Daniel Lutzky, *La nueva izquierda argentina: 1960-1980* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1984), p. 8.



Piglia joined a Maoist-oriented organisation called Vanguardia Comunista, and Altamirano and Sarlo became members of another Maoist group, the Partido Comunista Revolucionario (PCR).

Intellectuals were at the centre of the growing politicisation of society, which can be traced back to the pages of another significant magazine of the 1960s, *Pasado y Presente* (1963-1965 and 1973).<sup>43</sup> Edited in Córdoba by a number of young intellectuals, it analysed Argentine political events in the light of new Marxist theories, especially in their Italian version. The group's main figure, José 'Pancho' Aricó, was, for example, known for his translations of Antonio Gramsci's writings into Spanish for Lautaro, the Communist Party's publishing house. The group also edited the collection *Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente*, a compilation of Marxist literature, which comprised the main works of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, and the writings of twentieth-century Marxists, such as Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci and Rosa Luxemburg. Expelled from the Communist Party because of the critical stance he had adopted in relation to the Soviet Union, Aricó established close ties with leftist intellectuals in Buenos Aires. Juan Carlos Portantiero, another expellee of the Communist Party, contributed to *Pasado y Presente* on many occasions, and would become Aricó's long-term intellectual partner and friend.<sup>44</sup> Former members of *Contorno*, such as Noé Jitrik, León Rozitchner, and Oscar Masotta, also contributed with important articles to *Pasado y Presente*.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the journal explicitly aimed at fulfilling a task that *Contorno* had previously set: to bring together the

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<sup>43</sup> The most relevant scholarly study of *Pasado y Presente* is Raúl Burgos, *Los gramscianos argentinos: Cultura y política en la experiencia de Pasado y Presente* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2004). For an account of the role played by *Pasado y Presente*, *Los Libros*, and the collection *Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente*, as promoters of Maoist theory in Argentina in the 1960s and early 1970s see Adrián Celentano, 'El maoísmo en las iniciativas político-editoriales del grupo pasadopresentista (1963-1976)', *Prismas*, no. 18 (2004), 193-98. Celentano has also explored the trajectory of Vanguardia Comunista in Adrián Celentano, 'Maoístas y nueva izquierda en Argentina. Vanguardia Comunista y su reflexión sobre la construcción del partido', *Actas III Jornadas de Sociología de la UNLP* (December 2003) <[http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/trab\\_eventos/ev.6872/ev.6872.pdf](http://www.memoria.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/trab_eventos/ev.6872/ev.6872.pdf)> [accessed 25 April 2018].

<sup>44</sup> In an interview with Edgardo Mocca, Portantiero has stated that 'Pancho llegó a ser una especie de hermano mío. [...] Y además de la buena relación afectiva teníamos una muy buena relación intelectual. Pensábamos lo mismo, era impresionante'. Edgardo Mocca, *Juan Carlos Portantiero, un itinerario político-intelectual* (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Nacional, 2012), pp. 78-79.

<sup>45</sup> Oscar Masotta, an emblematic intellectual figure of the 1960s modernisation, wrote, for example, the first essay on Jacques Lacan published in Argentina for *Pasado y Presente*. See Oscar Masotta, 'Jacques Lacan o el inconsciente en la filosofía', *Pasado y Presente*, no. 9 (April-September 1965), 1-15.

proletariat and the intellectual middle classes. Accordingly, *Pasado y Presente*'s objective was to be more than just an intellectual publication; rather, it aimed to represent an entire generation of new intellectuals willing to intervene in the country's political life, and to champion the uprising of the Argentine proletariat, as its first editorial article eloquently expressed:

*Pasado y Presente* intenta iniciar la reconstrucción de la realidad que nos envuelve, partiendo de las exigencias planteadas por una nueva generación con la que nos sentimos identificados. [...] No siempre en la historia se perfila una nueva generación. Pero hay momentos en que un proceso histórico, caracterizado por una pronunciada tendencia a la ruptura revolucionaria, adquiere una fuerza y una urgencia tal que es visto y sentido de la misma forma por una capa de hombres en los que sus diversos orígenes sociales no han logrado aún transformarse en concepciones de clases cristalizadas y contradictorias.

¿Se está produciendo este fenómeno en nuestro país? Creemos que sí. Basta observar con un mínimo de atención esa amplia escala de hombres que van de los 25 a los 35 años – reconociendo empero cuanto de aproximativo hay en la estimación – para comprender que tienen algo en común. Que los une un mismo deseo de hacer el inventario por su cuenta, que desean ver claro y que para ello apelan a la franqueza rechazando la demagogia, la grandilocuencia, las mentiras, el disfraz de una realidad que comienza a desnudar y a comprender en toda su dialéctica complejidad. Que más que las palabras les interesan las esencias, los contenidos. Una generación que no reconoce maestros no por impulsos de simplista negatividad, sino por el hecho real de que en nuestro país las clases dominantes han perdido desde hace tiempo la capacidad de atraer culturalmente a sus jóvenes mientras el proletariado y su conciencia organizada no logran aun conquistar una hegemonía que se traduzca en una coherente dirección intelectual y moral. Es preciso partir de esta dolorosa realidad para comprenderla en su raíz y transformarla.<sup>46</sup>

The importance of this fragment lies in the self-definition of *Pasado y Presente* as a generational enterprise: the statement summarises the intellectual and political concerns, intertwined at the time, of a large group of people in Argentina. At the same time, the quotation betrays a rejection of all previous political and cultural experiences aligned with the dominant classes, setting forth a foundational political program – to a great extent influenced by Gramscian Marxism – in which the conquest of a political hegemony would serve the purpose of transforming social reality. Aricó's words show the extent to which politics became the most potent and relevant variable of the intellectual efforts of this

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<sup>46</sup> José Aricó, 'Pasado y Presente', *Pasado y Presente*, no. 1 (June 1963), 1-17 (pp. 1-2).

generation. The positioning of this group as moral and intellectual guides of the proletariat exerted great influence on the editors of *Punto de Vista*; Sarlo, for example, has acknowledged that Aricó and Portantiero were the promoters of formative cultural experiences:

[...] han dirigido [*Pasado y Presente*] la revista marxista y socialista más importante de la Argentina [...]. Ellos se habían exiliado como los directores de la revista que nos había formado a nosotros. Sobre todo los *Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente*, que habían sido para cualquier marxista de veinte años en los años sesenta la biblioteca.<sup>47</sup>

Both Aricó and Portantiero became key figures in the Argentine intellectual field before and after the 1976-1983 dictatorship, and their trajectories will be analysed later in relation to the ties they established with the Punto de Vista group while in exile after 1976.

Finally, another relevant editorial enterprise of the period worth highlighting was the Centro Editor de América Latina (CEAL), founded in 1966, after Onganía's military coup. The CEAL was created by Boris Spivacow, a mathematician and member of the Communist Party who had directed Eudeba, the UBA's publishing house. Eudeba had been created following the example of the Mexican Fondo de Cultura Económica, which entailed a particular vision about the editorial market: they aimed at reaching a vast audience with cheap editions of good-quality books.<sup>48</sup> This educational mission found continuity with the CEAL's editions, whose slogan was 'un libro al precio de un kilo de pan'.<sup>49</sup> According to former employees of CEAL, the publishing house was not very profitable due to the efforts made by Spivacow to sell cheap books.<sup>50</sup> However, and in spite of the modest salaries they received, those who worked in CEAL firmly believed in the importance of their work, as they considered it a substantial contribution to culture,

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<sup>47</sup> García and Mercader, 'Tozuda modernidad: entrevista a Beatriz Sarlo'.

<sup>48</sup> Fondo de Cultura Económica was directed by Orfila Reynal, who later founded Siglo XXI in Mexico. Both publishing houses had branches in Buenos Aires, and Orfila Reynal offered his advice for Eudeba. For an account of Eudeba's development see Oscar Fernandez, 'EUDEBA. El Estado en la edición de libros en la Argentina (1958-1980)', in *Centro Editor de América Latina. Capítulos para una historia*, ed. by Mónica Bueno and Miguel Ángel Taroncher (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2006), pp. 39-61.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Judith Gociol, 'El Rompecabezas CEAL. Una posible guía de lectura', in *Más libros para más. Colecciones del Centro Editor de América Latina*, ed. by Judith Gociol and others (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Nacional, 2007), pp. 12-16.

<sup>50</sup> Patricia Somoza and Elena Vinelli, 'Los protagonistas: conversación retrospectiva', in *Centro Editor de América Latina*, ed. by Bueno and Taroncher, pp. 280-323.

not for the elites but for workers, housewives and children. In 1967, CEAL edited *Capítulo. Historia de la literatura argentina*, published in collectable instalments or ‘fascículos’, and directed by Adolfo Prieto and Roger Pla, which included contemporary writers in the history of Argentine literature, a novelty when compared to other histories of Argentine literature. Another collection, *Capítulo universal*, was directed by the literary critic Jaime Rest, who greatly influenced *Punto de Vista*’s editors, and Beatriz Sarlo in particular. She has recognised Rest as the figure who taught her how to read texts critically when she was a university student, since Rest taught English Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters.<sup>51</sup> Beatriz Sarlo and Carlos Altamirano would work at CEAL between 1976 and 1983 (that is, during the entire period of dictatorship); CEAL was not only a key publishing house before and after the 1976 coup, but also represented a secure space (both in a material and a cultural sense) for these two founders of *Punto de Vista*, whose first published books owed much to Spivacow’s patronage.

Let us now return to the historical context of 1973, when the military government – led at that time by Onganía’s successor, Alejandro Agustín Lanusse – lifted the ban on Peronism. This allowed Perón to return to power after a series of events, which included the short presidency of Perón’s left-leaning envoy, Héctor Cámpora. Perón, who, from exile, had saluted the group of young leftists who were ‘peronised’ (the guerrilla group Montoneros was the most prominent), now rejected this cohort of young middle-class sectors aligned with both a nationalistic and a Marxist stance.<sup>52</sup> The latent conflict between the guerrilla group and Perón himself remained unresolved, as Perón died in July 1974, soon after the speech in which he called the revolutionary youths ‘callow and stupid’.<sup>53</sup> In the years between Perón’s death and the 1976 military coup, violence increased, both from revolutionary organisations and the State. The main guerrilla organisations, Montoneros and the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP), decided to

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<sup>51</sup> For Sarlo’s account of her experience as Rest’s student see Pablo Chacón, ‘Beatriz Sarlo’, *Letras Libres*, no. 153 (September 2011), <<http://www.letraslibres.com/mexico-espana/beatriz-sarlo>> [accessed 23 April 2018].

<sup>52</sup> The most relevant scholarly account of the history of Montoneros remains Richard Gillespie, *Soldiers of Perón: Argentina’s Montoneros* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

<sup>53</sup> David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1982: From Spanish Colonization to the Falklands War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1986), p. 362.

intensify the ‘militarisation’ of their members and actions in 1975, which resulted in the escalation of violence.<sup>54</sup> On the government side, without Perón, the first in the line of succession to the presidency was the vice president, at that time Perón’s wife, María Estela Martínez. Popularly known as ‘Isabelita’, Argentina’s first female president had no political experience, and most of the decisions she took while in power were influenced by José López Rega, Minister of Social Welfare and Perón’s former personal secretary, an obscure figure nicknamed ‘el Brujo’.<sup>55</sup> During his two years of political influence, López Rega created and commanded the Alianza Anticomunista Argentina (Triple A), a paramilitary organisation that kidnapped and killed people whom the government regarded as ‘subversive’.<sup>56</sup> In this context of political instability and escalating violence, the Army decided to overthrow Isabelita and establish a government led by a military junta, which was headed by General Jorge Rafael Videla. Rather than putting an end to the illegal kidnapping and killing of people, however, the dictatorship, self-styled as the ‘Process of National Reorganization’, only refined the methods of repression, torture and assassination first applied by the Triple A.<sup>57</sup>

The fracturing of the cultural field was unprecedented: books were prohibited, newspapers and magazines were shut down, and educational institutions were subjected to the control of the government. With censorship extending to every form of culture and public manifestation, people were kidnapped, tortured and disappeared, on some occasions merely because their names were written on the address book of a friend who had been blacklisted by the military.<sup>58</sup> Cultural censorship was systematically and efficiently exercised by the military regime. According to the official discourse imposed by the military, culture was a vehicle for subversion, as they considered the cultural

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<sup>54</sup> Novaro and Palermo, *La dictadura militar*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>55</sup> A fictional reconstruction of the figure of López Rega and his relation with Isabel Perón is Luisa Valenzuela, *Cola de Lagartija* (Buenos Aires: Bruguera, 1983).

<sup>56</sup> It is estimated that the Triple A killed at least 900 people between 1973 and 1976. Novaro and Palermo, *La dictadura militar*, p. 81.

<sup>57</sup> For an overview of the constitution of and the actions carried out by the Triple A see Novaro and Palermo, *La dictadura militar*, pp. 80-94.

<sup>58</sup> The term ‘disappeared’ refers to the people who were kidnapped by the so-called Task Groups during the dictatorship in Argentina, whose whereabouts remain unknown to their families. As the military denied carrying out these clandestine and illegal actions, they stated that the kidnapped people were neither live nor dead, they were ‘disappeared’. Romero, *A History of Argentina*, pp. 217-8.

system to be exposed to ideological infiltration and to corrupting ideology.<sup>59</sup> Although the kind of repression implemented during the 1976 dictatorship had already begun under Perón and Isabelita's presidencies, in 1976 its mechanisms became stricter, crueller and more systematic. According to the literary critic Andrés Avellaneda, censorship operated on many different levels, from very explicit rules and laws that banned cultural products to more subtle, suggestive and secret actions that engendered a culture of fear in the country.<sup>60</sup> A publicly known anecdote illustrates how the military persecuted and threatened intellectuals. Before 1976, when Perón had already died and the Triple A was already carrying out kidnappings and disappearances of people, the editor of *Crisis* magazine, Eduardo Galeano, known for his celebrated book *The Open Veins of Latin America*, received a phone call in which an anonymous voice said: 'We are going to kill you all.'<sup>61</sup> Galeano replied with his characteristic humour, stating that the hours for threats were from 6pm to 8pm. He enjoyed the joke, but at the same time found himself unable to move out of fear.<sup>62</sup> Some *Crisis* members were later disappeared, and the magazine was last published in 1976. This incident serves as an example of how closely the kidnappings and disappearances of people affected everyone who belonged to the world of cultural magazines, especially the above-mentioned intellectuals, all of whom were aligned with leftist positions. In this context, not only did censorship affect the entire field of cultural production, but self-censorship, too, started to affect artists, writers and intellectuals.<sup>63</sup>

The military dictatorship established in 1976 successfully achieved the complete

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<sup>59</sup> Andrés Avellaneda, 'Argentina militar: Los discursos del silencio', in *Literatura argentina hoy*, ed. by Kohut and Pagni, pp. 13-30 (p.15).

<sup>60</sup> Avellaneda traced four different levels of censorship: a) public laws and decrees that prohibited certain books, magazines, films, plays or TV shows, b) less visible communications that determined the banning of some form of cultural expression, c) the vagueness and amplitude of the prohibition standards that fostered the arbitrariness on behalf of the authorities to ban different forms of cultural expressions, and d) documents that vaguely suggested the inconvenience of publishing certain things, which was ultimately a subtle threat for writers and artists. Avellaneda, 'Argentina militar', pp. 21-22.

<sup>61</sup> King, 'Las revistas culturales de la dictadura a la democracia', p. 89.

<sup>62</sup> See Galeano's testimony in Miguel Russo, 'La revista "Crisis" y la busca del tiempo perdido', *Miradas al Sur*, 19 May 2013.

<sup>63</sup> Andrés Avellaneda has explored the discourse imposed by the military according to which culture, susceptible to corruption, had to be subordinated to 'moral' and 'noble' principles dictated by the State. Avellaneda, 'Argentina militar', p. 14.

deactivation of political agitation, which had characterised the first half of the 1970s. As Halperín Donghi has pointed out, although the majority of the victims of repression came from popular sectors, the military targeted a particularly large group of young, educated, urban, middle-class citizens.<sup>64</sup> It was within this group, increasingly politicised, that intellectuals, particularly those from *Punto de Vista*, were to be found. In order to better understand the ideological disputes gaining traction in the pre-dictatorship years, I will provide a brief account of the history of *Los Libros* magazine. Not only can this publication serve as an example of the way in which intellectuals saw themselves dominated by the political logic in the early 1970s, it is also the direct antecedent of *Punto de Vista*.

### *Los Libros* (1969-1976)

First published in July 1969, *Los Libros* has been considered the promoter of a significant modernisation of criticism in Argentina, as it introduced French structuralism and Marxist criticism – in particular, Althusser’s reading of Marx – to Argentina’s intellectual field.<sup>65</sup> It was published on a monthly basis, and sold, on average, 3000 copies each month, which were distributed in Argentina, several other Latin American countries, the United States and Canada.<sup>66</sup> The magazine’s founder, Héctor Schmucler, a former student of Roland Barthes in France, decided to create *Los Libros* based on the model of the French *La Quinzaine littéraire*, a review of literary criticism, and arts and humanities more generally. Schmucler, who had participated in previous editorial projects in Argentina, such as the above-mentioned *Pasado y Presente*, believed that *Los Libros* had to be an intellectual magazine centred on criticism, as its first editorial posited:

*Los Libros* no es una revista literaria, entre otras, porque condena la literatura en el papel de ilusionista que tantas veces se le asignara. La revista habla del

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<sup>64</sup> Tulio Halperín Donghi, ‘El presente transforma el pasado: el impacto del reciente terror en la imagen de la historia argentina’, in *Ficción y política. La narrativa argentina durante el Proceso militar*, ed. by René Jara and Hernán Vidal (Buenos Aires: Alianza Estudio, 1987), pp. 71-95 (pp. 71-2).

<sup>65</sup> Masiello, ‘Argentine Literary Journalism’, p. 51. For a detailed account of the influence of Althusser in *Los Libros* see Anna Popovitch, ‘Althusserianism and the Political Culture of the Argentine New Left’, *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 49, no. 1 (2014), 203-22.

<sup>66</sup> Popovitch, p. 211.

libro, y la crítica que se propone está destinada a desacralizarlos, a destruir su imagen de verdad revelada, de perfección a-histórica.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, in its initial years, *Los Libros* exercised a kind of a literary criticism that incorporated modern and new disciplines – sociology, psychoanalysis, media studies, and studies of popular culture – in order to advance a view of culture that would challenge the official discourse.<sup>68</sup> Although literature and literary criticism were central topics in the initial years of *Los Libros*, politics and other areas of culture, such as architecture, linguistics, music, philosophy, psychoanalysis, sociology and theatre, were also extensively examined in the review. A glance at the contributors to *Los Libros* suggests a continuity between the projects of *Contorno* and *Pasado y Presente*, and the magazine founded by Schmucler, for the *contornistas* Oscar Masotta, David and Ismael Viñas, and former members of *Pasado y Presente*, such as Portantiero and Aricó, wrote articles and book reviews for *Los Libros*' first issues. As Francine Masiello and Anna Popovitch have remarked, the review advanced an analysis of literature and culture through theoretical approaches, which regarded the artistic process as ideologically and socially determined.<sup>69</sup>

This approach, influenced by Althusser's theory of ideology, exhibited the above-mentioned politicisation of intellectuals in this period and the constitution of an Argentine new left, highly influenced by ideas of social revolution.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the question of the political commitment of intellectuals to the social reality and the emancipation processes happening in Latin America during those years was frequently discussed and permeated most of the articles published in *Los Libros*. An example of the stance adopted by the contributors to *Los Libros* in regard to Latin American politics and the political commitment of intellectuals was the issue dedicated to Cuba, in 1971 – in particular, to

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<sup>67</sup> Los Libros, 'La creación de un espacio', *Los Libros*, no. 1 (July 1969), 3.

<sup>68</sup> Popovitch, p. 211.

<sup>69</sup> Masiello, 'Argentine Literary Journalism', p 53. Popovitch, p. 212.

<sup>70</sup> Popovitch has defined the Argentine new left as 'a relatively short-lived cluster of eclectic groups that converged at certain points in response to a series of international and local events', such as the Cuban Revolution, the fall of Perón in 1955 and the appearance of the Peronist resistance movement after Perón's fall. In Popovitch's account, the Argentine new left included splinter groups that broke with the Argentine communist and socialist parties, Trotskyist and Maoist organisations (such as Vanguardia Comunista, the group that funded the first issues of *Punto de Vista*), Peronist guerrilla formations and journals such as *Contorno*, *Pasado y Presente*, and *Los Libros* amongst others. Popovitch, p. 205.



the Padilla affair.<sup>71</sup> This affair revolved around a Cuban writer who originally supported Fidel Castro's revolution in 1959, but who later criticised it and was subsequently imprisoned. The case divided the opinion of writers and intellectuals across the world, as some of them – such as Ítalo Calvino, Carlos Fuentes, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Mario Vargas Llosa, amongst others – supported Padilla and raised complaints against Castro's regime, while others – most notably, Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez – sided with the Cuban government. In *Los Libros*, the stance adopted by the contributors was not straightforwardly supportive of Padilla's imprisonment, but was nonetheless critical of those writers who signed the petition supporting Padilla, which ultimately suggested a viewpoint that prioritised political commitment over freedom of speech.

As most analyses of *Los Libros* point out, the magazine shifted from a politicised stance to an overtly partisan militancy when the editorial board underwent a restructuring in 1971, as a result of which three young regular contributors, Altamirano, Piglia and Sarlo, assumed the direction of the review.<sup>72</sup> The story of the replacement of Schmucler as director is important in order to understand the political climate during the first half of the 1970s. Ever since the first issue, Ricardo Piglia had worked together with Schmucler on the production of the magazine, yet he did not appear as a staff member until issue 23 (November 1971), when he and Carlos Altamirano, another young literary critic from Corrientes province who had settled in Buenos Aires, formally became editors.<sup>73</sup> Both Altamirano and Piglia were involved in political organisations: Altamirano had been a member of the PCR since 1967, a party with a Maoist orientation, while Piglia participated in *Vanguardia Comunista*, another Marxist-Leninist organisation with Maoist

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<sup>71</sup> See, *Los Libros*, 'Puntos de partida para una discusión', *Los Libros*, no. 20 (June 1971), 4-5.

<sup>72</sup> Apart from Popovitch and Masiello, other articles which analyse the political shifts in *Los Libros* are Diego Cousido, 'Actualización teórica, lucha ideológica en el caso de *Los Libros*', *Cuadernos Críticos de Comunicación y Cultura*, no. 4 (2008), 107- 27; and Patricia Somoza and Elena Vinelli, 'Para una historia de *Los Libros*', in *Los Libros* [facsimile edition] (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Nacional, 2011), pp. 9-19.

<sup>73</sup> 'Trabajaba con Schmucler en el diagrama y en la preparación de los números [...] Cómo sería yo en ese momento que la revista me parecía demasiado liberal y por eso no quise aparecer. Era todo un izquierdista.' Piglia's account of his participation in *Los Libros*, quoted in Patricia Somoza and Elena Vinelli, 'Historia oral de *Los Libros*', *Radar*, *Página 12*, 8 April 2012.

tendencies.<sup>74</sup> Both organisations worked closely with workers' unions and peasants in different provinces of Argentina, and Piglia and Altamirano normally had intellectual and educational responsibilities in the organisation.<sup>75</sup> As a member of Vanguardia Comunista, Piglia even went to China for six months in 1974, where he met his peers from the Chinese Communist Party, although in his diaries from those years, he only recorded his meeting with the dissident poet Kuo Mo-Jo.<sup>76</sup> In ideological terms, these parties shared the revolutionary stances of other leftist parties on the rise in Argentina during this period, the exception being that they rejected Peronism. This marked a stark contrast with the increasing sympathies for left-Peronism of Schmucler and many other intellectual peers. In November 1971, when Altamirano and Piglia formally joined the editorial board, the magazine's masthead changed from 'Un mes de publicaciones en América Latina' to 'Para una crítica política de la cultura'. The introduction of the word 'política' gave a specific nuance to a publication that, until 1970, did not exactly disregard politics, but was not exclusively centred on it.

In March 1972, Beatriz Sarlo joined the editorial board at the suggestion of Schmucler. She had published several articles in the review, including an account of the social-political situation in Bolivia, an interview with the Bolivian writer and journalist Augusto Céspedes, and a number of reviews about contemporary Argentine literature. By that time, Sarlo was also active in the left-Peronist movement, as were many of her young intellectual peers. Schmucler invited her and two other regular contributors, Miriam Chorne (who was also Schmucler's partner) and Germán García, to join the magazine's editorial board. His strategy was to counterbalance the anti-Peronism of Altamirano and Piglia with the convictions of Sarlo, whereas García and Chorne were more ideologically neutral.<sup>77</sup> However, Sarlo shifted to Maoism as soon as she joined the staff in May 1972,

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<sup>74</sup> For Altamirano's account of his involvement in the PCR see Javier Trímboli, 'Carlos Altamirano' [Interview], in *La izquierda en la Argentina*, ed. by Javier Trímboli (Buenos Aires: Manantial, 1998), pp. 13-41 (p. 13).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, II, pp. 348-49.

<sup>77</sup> Germán García has described his position with regard to the political debate in *Los Libros* as distanced from those of Altamirano, Piglia and Sarlo: 'Yo me consideraba una persona más bien de vanguardia. Yo estaba muy advertido de que las alianzas entre las vanguardias culturales y las políticas son siempre de medianoche, duran un ratito [...] Además, yo tenía mucha simpatía por ese mundo, los hippies, el Di Tella,

resulting in the deepening of political tensions within the editorial board.<sup>78</sup> Schmucler, Chorne and García abandoned the magazine a few issues later, after a disagreement regarding an article written by Altamirano on the current political situation in the country. More specifically, Altamirano's essay criticised the Gran Acuerdo Nacional (GAN), an agreement between the military, who had installed the de facto government in 1966, and the rest of the political parties to call for elections that same year and lift the ban on Peronism. In Altamirano's view, the agreement was nothing but an expression of 'bourgeois liberal-democracy' that exalted the benefits of the republican institutions, and reflected a social structure dominated by the capitalist class.<sup>79</sup> Ultimately, Altamirano's text rejected the agreement to call for elections on the basis of a rather dogmatic Marxist viewpoint, which opposed any form of liberal democracy. After this dispute, Altamirano, Piglia and Sarlo assumed the publication's leadership, and during the years until 1976, they published sixteen more issues, in which the magazine overtly became a Maoist journal: it emphasised its political stance, maintaining the black and white format that had been adopted in the previous year (1970), and focused on criticism of capitalism and imperialism. The titles on the covers of these issues express the increasing revolutionary standpoint of *Los Libros*: 'Liberación o dependencia', 'China después de la Revolución Cultural' and 'Capitalismo en la URSS' are some of the headlines from the last period of *Los Libros*.

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que los otros veían como restos de la corrupción burguesa y la influencia norteamericana.' Somoza and Vinelli, 'Historia oral de *Los Libros*'.

<sup>78</sup> In Sarlo's account: 'Yo creo que Toto [Schmucler] me invita a formar parte de ese consejo porque yo todavía era peronista, pero yo vuelvo de Trelew abandonando el peronismo y ya haciéndome del PCR o ya hecha del PCR.' Interview with Beatriz Sarlo (Buenos Aires, 4 August 2014).

<sup>79</sup> 'Se sabe también de qué modo esta ideología de la "libertad", y las instituciones que le son correlativas (elecciones, parlamento, etc.) corresponden a una forma de dominio de la clase capitalista'. Carlos Altamirano, 'Acuerdo y elecciones: el discurso del GAN', *Los Libros*, no. 29 (March-April 1973), 12-14 (p. 12).



Figure 2. Cover of Los Libros 28 (1972).



Figure 3. Cover of Los Libros 35 (1974).

One last political episode led Piglia to abandon the magazine in April 1975. That year was perhaps the peak moment of political agitation in Argentina during this period, which saw an escalation of violence. As already mentioned, Perón had died, leaving a power vacuum that his politically inexperienced wife could not fulfil, and which, along with the violence that had ruptured the country in 1975, ultimately paved the way for the 1976 military coup. In this context, new disagreements within the editorial board over the political situation arose: while Altamirano and Sarlo positively characterised Isabelita as a nationalist and the government she led as a ‘third-world’ government (the connotation was positive), Piglia rejected it, insofar as he considered it a pro-imperialist regime. Political affiliations, it seemed, were more relevant than cultural affinities in order to maintain a magazine’s cohesion.<sup>80</sup> In Piglia’s resignation letter to Altamirano and Sarlo, published in issue 40 (March-April 1975), political agreement, it is suggested, is intrinsic to any form of intellectual collaboration:

Mantener con estas diferencias (que son de fondo) nuestros acuerdos de trabajo nos obligaría a despolitizar la revista y convertirla en un órgano ‘de

<sup>80</sup> In his diaries from this year Piglia wrote: ‘Decidido a renunciar a la revista *Los Libros*. Las diferencias con Carlos y Beatriz son cada vez más definitivas, no se trata de las discrepancias literarias, que están desde siempre, sino de las posiciones políticas, que hasta ahora siempre han decidido mis posiciones públicas.’ Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, II, p. 388.

cultura' en el sentido más tradicional. Justamente porque estamos de acuerdo en que la política debe ser el centro de todo trabajo intelectual nos unimos en el proyecto de *Los Libros*, porque seguimos coincidiendo con ese criterio, hoy las diferencias políticas pesan más que nuestros acuerdos específicos.<sup>81</sup>

After Piglia's departure, Altamirano and Sarlo were able to publish four more issues, changing the masthead again, from 'Para una crítica política de la cultura' to 'Una política en la cultura', indicative of the extent to which politics had become the overwhelming focus of the magazine, since, now, culture was certainly subordinate to politics. Lastly, at the beginning of the coup in March 1976, the military broke into the *Los Libros* offices and shut down the magazine. Not only did this episode symbolise the political retreat of active intellectuals, it also represented the decline of the complex and varied web of young writers, journalists and thinkers born and bred in the culturally dynamic Buenos Aires of the 1960s. If the repressive government installed in 1966 had not deactivated the political agitation of young intellectuals, the crueller 1976 dictatorship would complete the task.

Many of the intellectual figures previously mentioned were forced to leave the country: Héctor Schmucler, Juan Carlos Portantiero, 'Pancho' Aricó, and David Viñas, amongst many others, went to Mexico; others, such as Eduardo Galeano and Oscar Masotta, left for Spain. Argentines were also welcomed in Venezuela, France and Italy, to name some of the main destinations of exile.<sup>82</sup> Many others, though, were caught by the military. The most well-known cases of intellectual persecution are the kidnapping and killing of writer Haroldo Conti in 1976, and of writer and journalist Rodolfo Walsh in March 1977. David Viñas' son and daughter were also kidnapped and disappeared. Rodolfo Walsh's daughter, Victoria, who worked for *Primera Plana*, and Susana 'Piri' Lugones, one of the main editors at Jorge Álvarez Editor and granddaughter of the essayist and poet Leopoldo Lugones, were also disappeared by the military between 1976 and 1980. In this context, Piglia, Sarlo and Altamirano all abandoned their political commitments, and lived in semi-clandestine conditions during the first years of the dictatorship.

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<sup>81</sup> Ricardo Piglia, 'A mis compañeros Beatriz Sarlo y Carlos Altamirano', *Los Libros*, no. 40 (March-April 1975), 3.

<sup>82</sup> For a list of writers who fled the country between 1973 and 1979 see de Diego, *¿Quién de nosotros escribirá el Facundo?*, pp. 159-60.

*Punto de Vista*, which first emerged in 1978, differed from *Los Libros* insofar as any explicit leftist political position would amount to no less than a death sentence. However, *Los Libros* remained the most direct influence on the new magazine, not only in terms of its formal aspects – as *Punto de Vista* adopted a format and design that resembled *Los Libros* – but also in the selection of topics that featured in the publication, from politics (only after the repression began to abate) to literary criticism, art, cinema, history and psychoanalysis. Most importantly, *Punto de Vista* aimed at maintaining a space for theoretical modernisation that *Los Libros* had inaugurated.

### Conclusion

From the cultural modernisation to the politicisation of culture and intellectuals, the 1960s and 1970s were seminal decades for Argentine culture. In these years, the country experienced innovations in the artistic and cultural fields, the expansion of the middle classes, and, subsequently, their patterns of cultural consumerism. In addition, a new cohort of young intellectuals emerged, rejecting the liberalism of the older cultural elites and putting forward a worldview that combined new theories of psychoanalysis, French existentialism, Gramscian and Althusserian Marxism, together with political commitment. The editors of *Punto de Vista* were, to a great extent, members of this generation of young activists: they closely witnessed the cultural changes of 1960s Buenos Aires, they frequented the Di Tella and trendy publishing houses, such as Eudeba or Jorge Álvarez. They joined, in the early 1970s, the politicisation of middle class intellectuals and actively participated in the Argentine new left. Moreover, they engaged in the publication of *Los Libros* in the early 1970s, gaining experience as editors of one of the most relevant reviews in the Argentine intellectual field of that era. At the same time, they closely engaged with political organisations – in Altamirano, Piglia and Sarlo's case, of Maoist tendencies – and embraced ideas of social and political revolution. The enthusiasm put into revolutionary utopias had, however, a definite end in March 1976, when the military coup forced them into hiding. It was the beginning of one of the darkest periods in Argentina's recent history, and the years in which *Punto de Vista* was first

published. The next chapter will analyse the emergence of this little review, as well as the cultural debates that featured in its first issues.

## Chapter 2: The early dictatorship years (1978-1981). Issues 1-11

No todo lo que se escuchaba era el silencio.<sup>1</sup>

Somos un grupo de francotiradores atrás de una vanguardia en dispersión.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter focuses on the first period of *Punto de Vista*, which spanned three years: from 1978, when the magazine first came out, to 1981, when the initial censorship imposed by the military began to abate. Some scholars, such as Vulcano and de Diego, consider that the history of *Punto de Vista* should be divided into two periods, before and after the dictatorship, on the basis that, since 1983, the magazine mainly focused on the matter of democracy.<sup>3</sup> However, I adopt here the periodisation established by Patiño, who traces a distinction within the period 1978-1983, as *Punto de Vista*'s first eleven issues can be analysed as one thematically coherent corpus.<sup>4</sup> Firstly, politics were entirely absent in the first eleven instalments, whereas towards the end of 1981, the magazine adopted a more explicitly political stance, conveyed in the editorials published after issue 11. In terms of its format, the magazine maintained the same design for the first eleven issues, changing to a smaller, less minimalistic format from issue 12. Moreover, the names of the editors were omitted in the first eleven issues, but later disclosed, from 1981. Lastly, it is possible to identify specific topics and themes that generated sustained attention during this phase: there was, for example, a noticeable interest in the analysis of Argentine literary and cultural history, as well as methodological discussions about the study of culture. Although the magazine underwent significant re-structuring during the transition to democracy – which is, in this thesis, demarcated by two time periods: the pre-dictatorship years and the post-dictatorship years – to study the first eleven instalments as

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<sup>1</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, 'Política, ideología y figuración literaria', in *Ficción y política*, ed. by Jara and Vidal, pp. 30-59 (p. 32).

<sup>2</sup> Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, III, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> Vulcano, p. 105, and de Diego, *¿Quién de nosotros escribirá el Facundo?*, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> Patiño, *Intelectuales en transición*, p. 10.



containing specific characteristics will allow us to develop a fine-grained analysis of the history of the magazine.

Thus, in this chapter I will first examine the initial years of the magazine by considering its emergence, the conformation of the editorial board, the original goals set by the editors, and the difficulties entailed in the publication of an independent review when set against such a repressive political context. I will also analyse the core topics and issues that the magazine discussed and commented on during these years, which included the revision of Argentine cultural history, the introduction of new literary and cultural criticism, and the examination of areas of Argentine culture that, in spite of censorship, were still accessible to the editors.

### The origins

*Punto de Vista* first appeared in March 1978 in Buenos Aires. The cover, in black and white paper, featured a very distinctive logo of the magazine's title, followed by the words 'revista de cultura' in the top right, an illustration by Belgian artist Jean-Michel Folon in the centre, and, below, three headings introducing the issue's content: 'Fin del mundo: superstición y milenarismo', 'El lugar de la locura', and 'Novela latinoamericana, parodia y grotesco'. No names were given on this enigmatic cover, and only a few – indicating the articles' authors and a director named Jorge Sevilla – were displayed on the second page, along with the table of contents. It was not until a few issues later that the names of those who actually created the magazine, Carlos Altamirano, Ricardo Piglia, and Beatriz Sarlo, were revealed. According to Altamirano's account of the immediate months after the coup, he and Sarlo, who in the years of *Los Libros* had begun a relationship, decided to stay in Argentina rather than leave the country:

Beatriz Sarlo era mi compañera y obviamente debatimos el asunto del exilio; nos preguntamos qué hacer, si era conveniente irnos o quedarnos. Y no hubo dudas frente a esta cuestión: lo que había que hacer era quedarse.<sup>5</sup>

Sarlo recalled taking that decision in similar terms:

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<sup>5</sup> Trímboli, 'Carlos Altamirano' [Interview], p. 15.

Estaba, por un lado, en una ciudad, Buenos Aires, que seguía siendo para mí ese ámbito concreto donde podía reconocirme como intelectual y donde, quizás en un acto de ensoñación política, apostaba a que mi discurso fuera nuevamente escuchado.<sup>6</sup>

In the aftermath of the coup, Altamirano, Piglia and Sarlo organised a series of clandestine meetings to discuss Argentine literary history with a group of intellectuals who had remained in the country, in a sort of internal exile.<sup>7</sup> They named this initiative ‘salón literario’, a reference to nineteenth-century Argentine thinkers from the so-called generation of 1837, who used to meet in an association named likewise.<sup>8</sup> The members of this twentieth-century salón literario came up with the idea of publishing a magazine. Convinced that this initiative was the only viable vehicle for resistance, the former editors of *Los Libros* talked to the leaders of Vanguardia Comunista, who agreed to finance the review’s first issues, under the condition that no other members of the magazine would know that the money was provided by the political organisation. In Altamirano’s account of those meetings:

Al abandonar el PCR, quedé flotando junto con alguna otra gente y, ya en 1976, conformamos un círculo que reunía a los que teníamos una común afinidad ideológica y política, que seguía circulando entre el marxismo y el maoísmo. En ese círculo estaban también Ricardo Piglia y Beatriz Sarlo; desde él tomamos contacto con Vanguardia Comunista [...]. Mantuvimos con ellos varias conversaciones políticas hasta que llegamos al acuerdo de editar una revista [...] que fuera de disidencia intelectual, que tuviera un papel activo en lo que se definía como lucha democrática contra la dictadura militar [...]. Paralelamente a esto, con otros amigos con los que íbamos a confluir finalmente en la revista *Punto de Vista* – me refiero a María Teresa Gramuglio y Hugo Vezzetti – constituíamos grupos de discusión intelectual. Así que

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<sup>6</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, ‘El campo intelectual: un espacio doblemente fracturado’, in *Represión y reconstrucción de una cultura: el caso argentino*, ed. by Saúl Sosnowski (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1988), pp. 95-107 (p. 103).

<sup>7</sup> Susana Zanetti, who was part on the group of intellectuals in these semi-clandestine meetings, has recalled her experience of the internal exile in similar terms to those exposed by Altamirano and Sarlo in Susana Zanetti, “Brechas del muro.” Exilio interior y autocensura. La poesía en Buenos Aires de la dictadura a la democracia’, in *Literatura argentina hoy*, ed. by Kohut and Pagni, pp. 275-86.

<sup>8</sup> An overview of the generation of 1837 and its main figures, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Juan Bautista Alberdi, can be found in Oscar Terán, *Historia de las ideas en la Argentina. Diez lecciones iniciales, 1810-1980* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2008), pp. 61-108. Other important works of reference are Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Una nación para el desierto argentino* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1982); and William Katra, *The Argentine generation of 1837: Echeverría, Alberdi, Sarmiento, Mitre* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1996).

como fruto del acuerdo con Vanguardia Comunista apareció en marzo de 1978  
*Punto de Vista*.<sup>9</sup>

*Punto de Vista* appeared in newsstands across Buenos Aires for the first time in March 1978, exactly two years after the military coup was launched. In order to avoid any suspicion over the editors' identities, some names had to be published, and Jorge Sevilla, a psychologist who had been president of the Asociación Argentina de Psicólogos, agreed to lend his name, which was used to give the magazine a formal director. The editors contacted Sevilla through the psychologist Hugo Vezzetti, a friend of Piglia who had also been involved in Vanguardia Comunista and had published articles in *Los Libros* on a number of occasions.<sup>10</sup> Vezzetti made early and insightful contributions to the magazine on the history of psychology in Argentina, and would remain a member of *Punto de Vista* until its last issue in 2008. He became the magazine's specialist in the history of psychology, psychoanalysis and memory studies, and has forged a renowned intellectual reputation.<sup>11</sup>

María Teresa Gramuglio and Nicolás Rosa were also part of the founding group. Both of them had escaped from Santa Fe to Buenos Aires, after receiving threats for their political involvement at the University of Rosario, where they used to teach literary theory.<sup>12</sup> Rosa was a young intellectual already known in the *porteño* intellectual milieu for his translations of Roland Barthes' *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, his contributions to *Los Libros*, and his book *Crítica y Significación* (1970), a collection of critical essays very well received by his intellectual peers from Buenos Aires.<sup>13</sup> Although Rosa did not remain

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<sup>9</sup> Trímboli, 'Carlos Altamirano' [Interview], p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Hugo Vezzetti, 'Salud mental: ideología y poder', *Los Libros*, no. 32 (October-November 1973), 28-32; and Hugo Vezzetti, 'Anfetaminas y derivados: usos y producción', *Los Libros*, no. 39 (January-February 1975), 19-23.

<sup>11</sup> Hugo Vezzetti has authored several books that examine the history of communism, of revolutionary violence, and of psychoanalysis in Argentina. Some of his most distinguished books are *La locura en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1985), *Pasado y presente. Guerra, dictadura y sociedad en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2002), *Sobre violencia revolucionaria. Memorias y olvidos* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2009), and *Psiquiatría, psicoanálisis y cultura comunista* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Sarlo, '*Punto de Vista*: una revista en dictadura y en democracia', p. 527.

<sup>13</sup> A study of Rosa's trajectory can be found in Judith Podlubne, 'Setecientosmonos y la modernización de la crítica literaria argentina', *Cuadernos de Literatura*, vol. 20, no. 39 (January-June 2016), 270-95. For critical essays on Rosa's book *Crítica y significación* see Josefina Ludmer, 'La Literatura abierta al rigor', *Los Libros*, no. 9 (July 1970), 5; and Adolfo Prieto, 'Estructuralismo y después', *Punto de Vista*, no. 34 (July-September 1989), 22-5.

a member of *Punto de Vista* for long (his name did not appear when the editorial staff was disclosed in 1981), he was part of the original group, and contributed with several book reviews and articles during this first period.<sup>14</sup> Gramuglio was also a literary critic who, like Rosa, had already begun a professional career at the University of Rosario under the influence of members of the Contorno generation, David Viñas and Adolfo Prieto, who used to teach there. Therefore, Gramuglio and Rosa had, like Altamirano, Piglia and Sarlo, been influenced by *Contorno* and its promotion of Sartrean existentialism and psychoanalysis. In 1968, Rosa and Gramuglio also took part in an art experience that embodied the notion, then in vogue, that the artist and the writer had to be politically engaged, or, to invoke an expression later coined by Sarlo, the union of the aesthetic avant-garde and revolutionary politics.<sup>15</sup> This art experience, called Tucumán Arde, consisted of a series of collective actions and city interventions – for example, artists and collaborators put up posters with the words ‘Tucumán Arde’ all over the cities of Rosario, Santa Fe and Buenos Aires – with the aim of raising political awareness.<sup>16</sup> As Ana Longoni has pointed out, Tucumán Arde was not an isolated art experience, but rather a representative episode of the crossroads between the artistic field, the academic field, and political activism in the 1960s.<sup>17</sup> Gramuglio and Rosa, along with other artists and intellectuals, wrote the manifesto of Tucumán Arde, participating in a decisive experience for the Argentine new left in the late 1960s. Although Rosa would soon distance himself from *Punto de Vista*, Gramuglio remained a member of the editorial board until 2004, becoming, along with Sarlo, a specialist in literature, literary criticism and Argentine cultural history. Her partner, Juan Pablo Renzi – one of the artists of Tucumán Arde –

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<sup>14</sup> The contributions of Rosa to *Punto de Vista* are: Gustavo Ferraris [pseudonym of Nicolás Rosa], ‘Sarmiento: crítica y empirismo’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 2 (May 1978), 6-11; Nicolás Rosa, ‘Los combates de la semiología. Sobre Luis Prieto, *Estudios de lingüística y semiología generales*’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 3 (July 1978), 16-18; Nicolás Rosa, ‘Traducir a Freud: ¿domesticar a Freud?’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 5 (March 1979), 22-24; Nicolás Rosa, ‘¿Freud contra Saussure? Sobre Jean Michel Rey, *Recorrido de Freud. Economía y discurso*’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 7 (November 1979), 21-24; and Nicolás Rosa, ‘La operación llamada lengua’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 9 (July-November 1980), 20-25.

<sup>15</sup> Sarlo, ‘Intelectuales, ¿escisión o mimesis?’, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> The study of reference on Tucumán Arde is Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del Di Tella a Tucumán Arde* (Buenos Aires: El cielo por asalto, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Ana Longoni, ‘El mito de Tucumán Arde’, *Artelogie*, no. 6 (2014) <<http://journals.openedition.org/artelogie/1348>> [accessed 23 April 2018].

arrived in Buenos Aires with her, and, although he never joined the staff of *Punto de Vista* officially, he became close friends with the other members, contributing to the magazine as a design advisor and illustrator.

For the first issues, the editors made serious efforts to attract quality contributions from people who could sign with their real names, as Sarlo has explained in an article that, retrospectively, traced the magazine's origins:

Desde Estados Unidos, Jean Franco le envió un artículo a Piglia, publicado en el primer número. Un joven antropólogo argentino, Miguel Ángel Palermo, con reservas pero admirable resolución, firmó el artículo que publicaríamos en ese difícil comienzo. Otro antropólogo y experto en educación de adultos, Fernando Mateo, estuvo dispuesto a poner su nombre desde el principio. Carlos D. Martínez, con una decisión que combatía el temor de aparecer públicamente, nos entregó un relato. Alberto Perrone se comprometió a traer notas y poemas. Mandamos algunas cartas al exilio, simplemente para que se enteraran de este proyecto tan precario material e intelectualmente. Desde el exilio, Mario Szichman nos mandó un fragmento de una novela; algún amigo puso 100 dólares en un sobre; otro, un rollo de revistas para que no quedáramos separados por completo de lo que pasaba en el mundo.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the magazine's first issue took shape: Jean Franco's essay about parody and grotesque in Latin American literature occupied the first pages, followed by Palermo's article and a fragment of Szichman's novel. The 'Libros' section filled most of the remaining pages, in which recently published books were reviewed by, in most cases, *Punto de Vista*'s editors. The instalment was completed by anonymous comments on foreign magazines, art exhibitions in Europe, and a review of Luis Buñuel's *Ese oscuro objeto del deseo*, written by the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes, which had been originally published in the Mexican magazine *Vuelta*. It was, in all, a rather incohesive and precarious issue: the essays revolved around very different topics, and the identity of some contributors remained anonymous, while others were relatively unknown writers. That said, to publish a review of this type represented an act of audacity in light of the political backdrop. According to Sarlo's account of that initial issue, approximately 3000 copies were printed, a number that *Los Libros* would have easily sold. But only a hundred copies were sold, which Sarlo distributed herself to newsstands and bookstores. Not many people were willing to take the risk of buying an unknown magazine at a time when owning a

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<sup>18</sup> Sarlo, '*Punto de Vista*: una revista en dictadura y en democracia', p. 527.

‘subversive’ book could cost a person’s life, and those who personally knew the editors had even fewer reasons to buy a publication they knew was created by former activists.<sup>19</sup>

When the third issue was in the printing press, in mid-1978, a dreadful event left the editors reeling: the leaders of Vanguardia Comunista, Elías Semán and Rubén Kristcausky, who had agreed to provide funds for the magazine, were kidnapped and killed by the military, along with other members of their organisation. After some deliberation over whether to stop publishing the magazine, the editors of *Punto de Vista* decided to continue with the project. In Sarlo’s account:

Cuando desaparece Vanguardia yo recuerdo que hicimos una reunión en el Tortoni, y les decimos que nos parece que la revista no camina, que nos parece muy difícil, que quizás haya que no sacarla. Nosotros estábamos en casas clandestinas, no sabíamos qué iba a pasar con nosotros. Entonces ahí Nicolás Rosa dice ‘No, ¡cómo no la sacamos, tenemos que sacarla!’ Y entonces ahí yo lo miro y me doy cuenta de que tiene razón. Estamos con la plata de los muertos y hay que sacarla por más peligroso que sea.<sup>20</sup>

Due to the financial constraints that this tragic episode brought about, the editors were forced to produce the magazine less frequently: instead of one instalment every two months, they started to publish it every four months, a pattern that the magazine maintained until its final days.<sup>21</sup> Though the money from Vanguardia Comunista was no longer available, sales started to increase after the third instalment, and *Punto de Vista* was thereafter self-funded by sales and subscriptions.<sup>22</sup> In its pages, it was also possible to find adverts for important publishing houses (Losada, Catálogos SRL, La Aurora, Pomaire, Bruguera), bookstores (Galerna, Fausto) and other magazines, such as *Hispanamérica*, a U.S.-based review edited by the Argentine critic Saúl Sosnowski. Although the editors did not receive money in exchange for the adverts, these announcements reflected the connections that *Punto de Vista* actively sought to establish

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<sup>19</sup> In Sarlo’s account of the first years of the magazine, ‘Pocos querían tener algo que ver con esa revista que, de pronto, aterrizó en algunos kioscos. Quienes nos conocían suponían que era tan peligroso comprarla como editarla.’ Sarlo, ‘*Punto de Vista*: una revista en dictadura y en democracia’, p. 528.

<sup>20</sup> García and Mercader, ‘Tozuda modernidad: entrevista a Beatriz Sarlo’.

<sup>21</sup> Sarlo had provided another testimony of the moment when the leaders of Vanguardia Comunista were disappeared in Adriana Bocchino and Mónica Bueno, ‘Entrevista a Beatriz Sarlo’, *CELEHIS: Revista del Centro de Letras Hispanoamericanas*, no. 9 (1997), 169-89 (p. 184).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

with publishing houses and magazines that were edited locally and abroad, as a way of legitimising their review, but also as a means of maintaining a web of intellectual relationships. In this sense, the magazine was never financially profitable; its editors considered it a space for intellectual militancy and resistance, while they made a living out of other jobs – Altamirano and Sarlo, for example, worked at CEAL during the dictatorship years.<sup>23</sup> However, to put it in Bourdieu's terms, the cultural capital they amassed throughout the years of publishing *Punto de Vista* has been considerable, and nowadays, many of its members are publicly presented as former editors of the magazine.

Throughout the dictatorship, nineteen issues were published, all in black and white, and of approximately thirty pages long. The logo, which the magazine kept until its final days, was designed by Carlos Boccardo, another friend of Piglia who was also close to Vanguardia Comunista.<sup>24</sup> As regards to the format, although the magazine was printed on low-quality paper, the modern and rationalist style of the format as well as the careful selection of illustrations suggested the attention paid to its aesthetic dimension. Every instalment contained artworks of, in most cases, Argentine artists: drawings by Florencio Molina Campos, Carlos Boccardo himself, Carlos Gorriarena, Juan Pablo Renzi and Norberto Gómez, to name a few, illustrated the pages of initial issues. In issue 6 (July 1979), Beatriz Sarlo first appeared as 'Secretaria de redacción' below the ghost-director's name, but no other names were presented. In the first instalments, some of the editors and contributors signed their articles with pseudonyms in order to conceal their identities. Aware that the very publication of the magazine already represented a risk, the editors decided to include specific themes that would avoid arousing the attention of the military censors, such as the revision of Argentine cultural history or the introduction of theories about literary criticism. This was not only a strategic move, for the editors of the magazine were genuinely interested in these questions. Moreover, the revision of the cultural past, as the following pages will examine, was associated with a search for identity that intellectuals undertook in this period, after witnessing the defeat of their 1960s' and early 1970s' utopias.

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<sup>23</sup> For an account of Sarlo's experience in CEAL see Bocchino and Bueno, 'Entrevista a Beatriz Sarlo', pp. 180-86.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Beatriz Sarlo (Buenos Aires, 6 March 2017).



Figure 4. Cover of *Punto de Vista* 1 (1978).

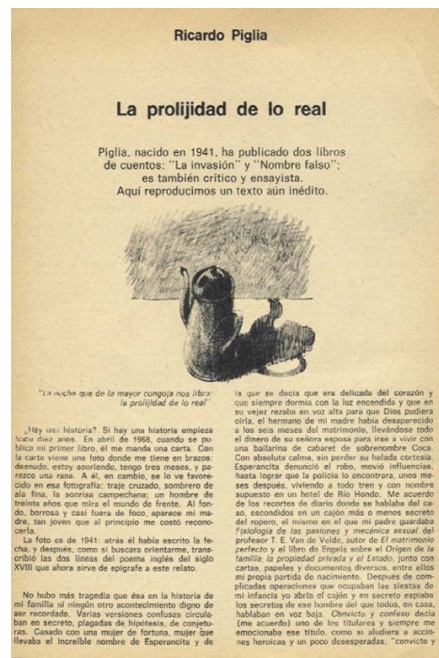


Figure 5. Fragment of Ricardo Piglia's *Respiración artificial*, published in *Punto de Vista* 3 (1978) with an illustration by Juan Pablo Renzi.

### The construction of a lineage: from Sarmiento to Borges

One of the main strands explored by *Punto de Vista* during this period was the examination and revision of previous intellectual experiences in Argentina, from Sarmiento and the generation of 1837 to Borges and *Sur*.<sup>25</sup> This exploration served a legitimising purpose, as *Punto de Vista* proclaimed itself heir to specific traditions from Argentine cultural history; at the same time, it provided parameters of identity to the magazine and the group associated with it. In order to understand how this goal was fulfilled, I will briefly refer to the novel that Piglia wrote in these years, *Respiración artificial*, since there are sections of this novel which provide clues about the way Piglia

<sup>25</sup> Plotkin and González Leandri have analysed this strategy set forth by *Punto de Vista* as a 'search for the lost lineage'. Plotkin and González Leandri, pp. 228-33.



and his generation returned to the past in order to reconstruct the history of Argentine cultural and intellectual elites.<sup>26</sup>

Published in 1980, Piglia's novel tells the story of a young writer from Buenos Aires, Emilio Renzi – Piglia's alter ego in most of his fictions – in search of his uncle Marcelo Maggi, a political militant living in Concordia, a town in Entre Ríos province, who went missing.<sup>27</sup> Renzi's motivation for meeting his uncle was the delivery of some papers Maggi had left in Buenos Aires, which contained the autobiography of a political figure and former member of the generation of 1837, Enrique Ossorio. One of the passages of this novel, written as a collage that combines different registers, is an excerpt from a letter allegedly sent to the uncle (or perhaps to Renzi) from a friend in Venezuela, which ends with the sentence: 'A veces (no es joda) pienso que somos la generación del '37. Perdidos en la diáspora. ¿Quién de nosotros escribirá el *Facundo*?'<sup>28</sup> This short statement hints at several ideas regarding Argentine intellectual history and the place of Piglia's generation in this history: on the one hand, the idea of being 'lost in diaspora' intimates recent experiences of exile. Moreover, Argentine history itself – and a close reading of *Respiración artificial* suggests this – had been riddled with stories of exile: Sarmiento and Alberdi, principal figures of the 1837 generation, had been sent into exile, as well as political figures such as Juan Manuel de Rosas and Perón.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the passage suggests a link between an 'us' and early nineteenth-century intellectuals, highlighted by the question '¿Quién de nosotros escribirá el *Facundo*?' The comparison was between Sarmiento, the author of *Facundo* – a core piece of Argentine literature published while Sarmiento was in Chile, where he lived in exile as he opposed Rosas' dictatorship in Argentina – and Piglia's generation, forced into exile and expelled from

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<sup>26</sup> The connection between *Respiración artificial* and the generation that Piglia belongs to has been highlighted in Halperín Donghi, 'El presente transforma el pasado', p. 81.

<sup>27</sup> Ricardo Piglia's second forename is Emilio and his second surname is Renzi, and Emilio Renzi is a character that appears in all of Piglia's fictions. For a testimony of Piglia's invention of this alter ego see Marina Kaplan, 'Between Arlt and Borges: an interview with Ricardo Piglia', *New Orleans Review*, no. 16/2 (Summer 1989), pp. 64-74.

<sup>28</sup> Ricardo Piglia, *Respiración artificial* (Barcelona: Random House Mondadori, 2013), p. 77.

<sup>29</sup> Piglia has argued, for example, that the founding works of Argentina's literature (*Facundo*, *Martín Fierro*, *Una excursión a los indios ranqueles*) have been written under the conditions of forced autonomy or trial. Ricardo Piglia, 'Sarmiento the writer', in *Sarmiento. Author of a nation*, ed. by Tulio Halperín Donghi and others (London: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 127-44.

public life by another dictatorship. But the link between the two generations is not limited to the notion of exile; it also relates to the figure of the intellectual, of which Sarmiento and his generation are early examples in the Argentine tradition.

In effect, the generation of 1837 constituted the first cohort of intellectuals in Argentina for whom theoretical concerns were naturally intertwined with political convictions: Sarmiento was President of the Republic between 1868 and 1874, whereas Alberdi wrote *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política*, a text on which the Argentine Constitution is based. But Sarmiento and Alberdi also played a role that intellectuals in Argentina would increasingly play, and which, to some extent, defined every intellectual coterie in the country: that of introducing the latest debates, philosophical currents, and innovations active in cultural centres across the globe to the national conversation.<sup>30</sup> This conception is reflected in the words of Esteban Echeverría, another member of the generation of 1837, who proposed to his peers that they exercise an *estrabismo* or squint: ‘Tendremos siempre un ojo clavado en el progreso de las naciones; y el otro en las entrañas de nuestra sociedad.’<sup>31</sup> In this sense, keeping up with the latest theories and ideas from Europe and the United States also formed a fundamental aspect of the intellectual work by the founders of postcolonial Argentina – in *Bases*, for example, the constitution of the United States is highly praised, while in *Facundo* most chapters are headed by quotations by French thinkers. Moreover, *Facundo*, with its references to liberal and romantic theories, its emphasis on the idea of progress, and its depictions of the Argentine desert and culture, was considered an archetypal and foundational text. But Sarmiento’s *Facundo* was not only the political manifesto of a generation, it was also a literary text. Once a national literary canon had been established by the beginning of the twentieth century, *Facundo* was thereafter considered a seminal

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<sup>30</sup> Plotkin and González Leandri state, for example, that there is a long tradition in Argentina of establishing connections between the local and the universal culture, which *Sur* embodied as no other cultural enterprise did before in Argentina. They also state about *Punto de Vista* that ‘traduce e introduce como *Sur* lo había hecho; y como Sarmiento, a veces cita en lengua incorrecta’. Plotkin and González Leandri, p. 224.

<sup>31</sup> Esteban Echeverría, *Dogma socialista a la juventud argentina* (Buenos Aires: Librería La Facultad, 1915), p. 144. The notion of *estrabismo* as characteristic of the 1837 generation has been first highlighted by David Viñas in *Literatura argentina y realidad política* and later resumed by different Argentine cultural historians to refer to the Argentine literary history, in the case of Piglia, and to refer to *Contorno*, in the case of Sarlo. See David Viñas, *Literatura argentina y realidad política* (Buenos Aires: Jorge Álvarez Editor, 1964), p. 125. See also Piglia, ‘Sarmiento the writer’, and Sarlo, ‘Los dos ojos de *Contorno*’.

work of national literature, or, in Piglia's words, a proto-novel which initiated a tradition in Argentina.<sup>32</sup>

If a brief digression on the generation of 1837 has been taken, it is because *Punto de Vista*'s first issues showed a recurrent interest in revising Argentina's intellectual past and origins, especially in relation to Sarmiento. Although Sarlo has argued that they named the 1977 meetings 'salón literario' as an ironic reference to the early nineteenth-century generation, it seemed that the irony retained a modicum of truth.<sup>33</sup> Did they not feel, to a certain extent, Sarmiento's heirs? The question might seem misguided, but it becomes plausible in the light of Halperín Donghi's suggestion that the generation of 1837 and Ricardo Piglia's own generation share clear similarities:

Algo más que un destino común une a la generación de la que Piglia se ha constituido en vocero y la de 1837; hay en el modo en que *Respiración artificial* se aproxima a la crisis que ha desviado brutalmente el destino de una generación una continuidad más estrecha con el adoptado por esos remotos precursores [...].<sup>34</sup>

For Halperín Donghi, the two generations are linked insofar as both suffered the defeat of their youthful utopias: while, in the case of the generation of 1837, the expectations of building an ideal liberal republic upon the precarious and shapeless southern territory were shattered, prominently, by Rosas' dictatorship, another dictatorship in 1976 also devastated the hopes of young intellectuals who, this time, believed in another type of future, revolutionary in kind. Moreover, making reference to the generation of 1837 also evinced a specific strategy adopted by *Punto de Vista* in its origins; that is, the construction of a lineage into which the magazine was inserted. This strategy was explicitly declared in issue 12, in the magazine's first editorial article:

Existe una tradición argentina que los que hacemos *Punto de Vista* reconocemos: una línea crítica, de reflexión social, cultural y política que pasa por la generación del 37, por José Hernández, por Martínez Estrada, por FORJA, por el grupo Contorno.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Piglia, 'Sarmiento the writer', pp. 135-36.

<sup>33</sup> Sarlo, '*Punto de Vista*: una revista en dictadura y en democracia', p. 526.

<sup>34</sup> Halperín Donghi, 'El presente transforma el pasado', p. 81.

<sup>35</sup> Punto de Vista, 'Punto de Vista', *Punto de Vista*, no. 12 (July-October 1981), 2.

This editorial, which marked the beginning of the second period of *Punto de Vista*, presented to its readers for the first time a commentary on the constitution, goals and purposes of publishing the review. It was a first attempt by the editors of *Punto de Vista* to define its mission, part of which was the intention to insert the magazine in a specific lineage: the generation of 1837, José Hernández (whose *Martín Fierro* is a foundational piece of Argentine literature), Martínez Estrada, FORJA, and the Contorno generation. This selection of intellectuals and groups of intellectuals was not fortuitous. As the quotation expresses, these figures shared an affinity in their social, cultural and political preoccupations. And, in a similar fashion, the editors of *Punto de Vista* saw themselves as part of that tradition, and not just defined by their fields of expertise. Moreover, the editors of the review took on the task of revising and analysing the legacy of these figures: Sarmiento, Martínez Estrada, *Contorno*, were the subject of some of the most important articles published in *Punto de Vista* during this first period.

Hence, Nicolás Rosa's text, 'Sarmiento: crítica y empirismo', in issue 2 (May 1978), written under the pseudonym 'Gustavo Ferraris', explored, for example, Sarmiento's pedagogical ideas about art and his reflections on language and poetry. More insightful, however, was Piglia's essay on *Facundo* in issue 8 (March-June 1980), in which he analysed two distinctive features of Sarmiento's writings: the use of quotes and the use of analogies, through which Piglia suggested a possible interpretation of Argentine literature.<sup>36</sup> For Piglia, the quotations in French heading each of *Facundo*'s chapters served the purpose of exhibiting the writer's erudition, and, at the same time, it exposed the importance given to the transplantation of European culture into the national context. As in Jean Franco's text, published in issue 1, which looked into the procedures by which European elements had been translated and transformed by Latin American literature, Piglia interpreted *Facundo*'s initial epigraph – a quote in French – as a transposition of European elements into the local context, which was particularly representative of the Argentine literary tradition. The quote he referred to ('On ne tué point les idées') had been mistranslated by Sarmiento as 'A los hombres se los degüella, a las ideas no', and later taught at schools as Sarmiento's own words under the form 'Bárbaros, las ideas no se

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<sup>36</sup> Ricardo Piglia, 'Notas sobre *Facundo*', *Punto de Vista*, no. 8 (March-June 1980), 15. For another analysis of the analogies presented in *Facundo* see Terán, *Historia de las ideas en la Argentina*, pp. 72-74.

matan'. For Piglia, this series of mistranslations are suggestive examples of a literary procedure according to which European ideas were transformed in order to adapt them to the national reality.<sup>37</sup> Piglia's text explored the analogies structuring *Facundo*: the best known is civilisation/barbarism, but others, such as Europe/America, city/countryside, and France/Spain, are recurrent in Sarmiento's text. Piglia's purpose was to examine the procedure of analogy as a key to understanding *Facundo*'s literary nature. In this short essay, Piglia was not simply analysing a seminal text of Argentine literature; he was also proposing to interpret the analogy (civilisation/barbarism, which had not been innocent throughout history, as it had very much demarcated political stands in Argentina) as a nation-defining literary procedure. Sarmiento's literary piece had, for Piglia, an effect in the political realm.<sup>38</sup> Another example of this return to the nineteenth century was Altamirano and Sarlo's text on Sarmiento's *Recuerdos de provincia*, published in issue 10 (November, 1980). The essay was a fragment of a larger text published that same year in the Venezuela-based magazine *Escritura*, directed by Ángel Rama. In this text, the authors analysed the construction of Sarmiento's autobiography in relation to Argentina's history between the 1810 declaration of independence and the fall of Rosas' regime in 1852. In its larger version, the essay was a comprehensive study of a conflictive period of Argentine history through the lens of Sarmiento's autobiography.

Second in the generational line was José Hernández, who represented the late-nineteenth-century liberal tradition. Hernández's most eminent work, *Martín Fierro*, written between 1872 and 1879, adopted the perspective of a gaucho who was sent to fight against the indigenous populations of the south. In *Facundo*, it is Sarmiento, a self-made liberal intellectual, who speaks, whereas in *Martín Fierro*, a gaucho recites the poem, adopting features of rural languages. Notwithstanding the many differences between these texts – *Facundo* is a series of essays about the national reality, whereas *Martín Fierro* is the most conspicuous example of gauchesque literature – both these works are seen as

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<sup>37</sup> Piglia, 'Notas sobre *Facundo*', p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> Piglia has a singular interpretation of the intertwined relations between fiction and politics, as he considers politics to make use of fictions to provoke the ascription of society to certain political trends. Therefore, he reads the political program set forth by *Facundo* as a fictional construction. See Piglia, 'Sarmiento the Writer'.

foundational works of Argentine literature.<sup>39</sup> The editors of *Punto de Vista* set out to analyse, more than *Martín Fierro* itself, the different interpretations of Hernández's poem throughout history. Moreover, *Punto de Vista* anticipated a way of reading Hernández's work within the context of the construction of national literature on the cover of issue 7, which reads 'Martín Fierro en la literatura nacional'. With articles by Gramuglio, Sarlo and Altamirano, who by this time had ceased to use pseudonyms, the issue brought together the main analysis of *Martín Fierro* to appear in the magazine. On the one hand, Gramuglio and Sarlo's essays explored Hernández's poem in relation to the social and political context in which it was written, highlighting, at the same time, elements of the author's biography. Both texts placed Hernández in a liberal tradition that, although similar to Sarmiento's, differed in important ways: for Hernández, the countryside did not represent the barbaric end of the dichotomy civilisation/barbarism; rather, the city represented the corrupting element.<sup>40</sup> Altamirano's text, on the other hand, focused its attention on the procedures by which *Martín Fierro* was enshrined as the national epic poem at the beginning of the twentieth century, when government elites invoked a national tradition in order to cope with the rapid changes brought about by modernisation. Altamirano described the different instances in which *Martín Fierro* was discussed by the elites: the survey in *Nosotros* magazine in 1913, according to which Hernández's poem was considered the 'poema nacional en cuya estrofa resuena la voz de la raza', and a series of renowned conferences delivered that same year by the intellectual Leopoldo Lugones,

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<sup>39</sup> The canonisation of *Martín Fierro* as the Argentine 'epic poem' was set forth by Leopoldo Lugones in a series of conferences at the theatre Odeon in 1918 later published in Leopoldo Lugones, *El Payador* (Buenos Aires: Huemul, 1972). The most relevant critical studies on the canonisation of *Martín Fierro* are the articles published in *Punto de Vista* during the later 1970s and early 1980s and later included in Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, *Ensayos argentinos. De Sarmiento a la vanguardia* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1983). As for Sarmiento's *Facundo*, there is ample bibliography on this subject, however, two studies of reference are also Altamirano and Sarlo, *Ensayos argentinos* and *Sarmiento: Author of a Nation*, ed. by Halperín Donghi. To give an example of the polarisation generated by the opposition between these two pieces of literature, Borges once said that 'si en lugar de canonizar el *Martín Fierro*, hubiéramos canonizado el *Facundo* como nuestro libro ejemplar, otra sería nuestra historia y sería mejor.' This was a post-scriptum added by Borges in 1974 to his 1944 prologue to Sarmiento's *Recuerdos de provincia* and reproduced in Jorge Luis Borges, *Prólogos* (Buenos Aires: Torres Agüero, 1975), p. 133.

<sup>40</sup> 'Hernández invierte el esquema del *Facundo*, pero lo hace manteniendo (y aceptando) sus términos, al denunciar que de la ciudad provienen la violencia y el despotismo que desquician a la campana'. María Teresa Gramuglio, 'Continuidad entre la Ida y la Vuelta de *Martín Fierro*', *Punto de Vista*, no. 7 (November 1979), 3-6 (p. 4).

who compared *Martín Fierro* with the Homeric epic poems.<sup>41</sup> In his conclusion, Altamirano argued that the canonisation of Hernández's work had served the purpose of establishing a national literature and a national identity.

*Punto de Vista*'s editors were, in a sense, following in the footsteps of Martínez Estrada, Borges, David Viñas and Adolfo Prieto, all of whom had previously created significant milestones in the exegesis of Argentine literature, in works that were very familiar to Gramuglio, Sarlo and Altamirano.<sup>42</sup> However, the contribution of this series of essays stemmed from the insightful reconstruction of the context of production of the works analysed. These essays inserted Argentine literary pieces into a broader political, cultural and social narrative, which greatly clarified the relevance of Sarmiento and Hernández's texts for the national literary tradition. This method was influenced by a series of readings the editors undertook during the early dictatorship years, which ultimately resulted in an original analytical approach that Sarlo and Altamirano named the 'sociology of literature'; this will be analysed in the next section.

Following the lineage *Punto de Vista* traced in 1981, the writer and essayist Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, was both an influence on, and an object of study for, the magazine, and Altamirano and Sarlo, dedicated an important essay in issue 4 (November 1978) to Martínez Estrada's 800-page book from 1948, *Muerte y transfiguración de Martín Fierro*. Defined by Altamirano and Sarlo as 'uno de los pocos libros importantes que ha producido la crítica literaria en la Argentina', Martínez Estrada's text was considered the fundamental book that had challenged the canonisation of *Martín Fierro* proposed by early twentieth-century intellectuals.<sup>43</sup> Instead of considering Hernández's poem as an example of the gauchesque genre, or as the Argentine epic poem, as Lugones did, Martínez Estrada interpreted *Martín Fierro* as a distinctive work of Argentine

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<sup>41</sup> The quotation of *Nosotros* is cited in Carlos Altamirano, 'La fundación de la literatura argentina', *Punto de Vista*, no. 7 (November 1979), 10-12 (p. 10).

<sup>42</sup> Some of these main works are Jorge Luis Borges' essay from 1951 'El escritor argentino y la tradición'; Viñas' *Literatura argentina y realidad política*, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada's *Muerte y transfiguración de Martín Fierro*, Adolfo Prieto's *La literatura autobiográfica argentina* and *Diccionario básico de literatura argentina*. For an account of the influence of Prieto's writings on Beatriz Sarlo and María Teresa Gramuglio see Sergio Pastormerlo, 'Reseña de Adolfo Prieto, Conocimiento de la Argentina. Estudios literarios reunidos', *Orbis Tertius*, vol. 20, no. 22 (December 2015), 94-96.

<sup>43</sup> Washington Victorini [pseudonym of Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo], 'Martínez Estrada: de la crítica a "Martín Fierro" al ensayo sobre el ser nacional', *Punto de Vista*, no. 4 (November 1978), 3-6 (p.3).

literature, which he studied in meticulous detail. For Altamirano and Sarlo, Martínez Estrada's analysis ultimately led to restoring the poem's centrality in the Argentine canon.<sup>44</sup> The discussion about *Martín Fierro*'s position in the Argentine tradition was, again, central. Was the pursuit of this tradition affirming, at the same time, a national identity? Perhaps it was necessary, in these years of clandestinity and of stark contrasts between military and revolutionary discourses, to ask, one more time, what it meant to be an Argentine. History and literature could provide, if not a comprehensive answer, at least a provisional response to this puzzle. In a sort of game of mirrors, to trace the origins of the question about nationality – which had been first posed at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the generation of 1837 unfruitfully tried to design, as Halperín Donghi has argued, a nation for the Argentine desert – was simultaneously a way of posing that question about national identity once again.<sup>45</sup>

The genealogical list was completed by *Contorno*, to which *Punto de Vista*'s editors were nearer in generational terms as well as personally. *Contorno* was, as stated before, an important influence on *Punto de Vista*, and in issue 13 (November 1981) Sarlo published her article, 'Los dos ojos de *Contorno*', which became a seminal study of the 1950s magazine. Although the series of texts that I will analyse in the following paragraphs were published during what I identify as the second period of *Punto de Vista*, it is necessary to study them in this section, as they shed light on the genealogical line in which the magazine inserted itself. In relation to *Contorno*, Sarlo argued, using the metaphor of *estrabismo* or squint also applied to Echeverría, that it had been a groundbreaking publication in Argentina's cultural history, because one of its 'eyes' surveyed traditionally disregarded areas of national culture. From the figure of Rosas, to writer Roberto Arlt, *Contorno* had recovered symbols of the Argentine identity disregarded by previous intellectual elites. Sarlo concluded her article with a critical comment that pointed to those aspects of the cultural past that, nevertheless, were ignored by the 1950s

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<sup>44</sup> For an analysis of Martínez Estrada's *Muerte y transfiguración de Martín Fierro* in the line of Altamirano and Sarlo's study see Emir Rodríguez Monegal, 'El *Martín Fierro* en Borges y Martínez Estrada', *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 40, no. 87-88 (April-September 1974), 287-302.

<sup>45</sup> Halperín Donghi, *Una nación para el desierto argentino*, p. 8.



magazine: 'es notorio que *Contorno* no pudo leer a Borges, que leyó mal a Onetti'.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, she argued that *Contorno* was obsessed with linking intellectual traditions, literature and politics in Argentina, a statement that could be extrapolated to *Punto de Vista*:

*Contorno* tiene la obsesión de los linajes intelectuales, la idea de que no solo es posible, sino también necesario, reordenar las tradiciones políticas y culturales de la Argentina. [...] Toda la literatura argentina es leída desde la historia. Lo importante para *Contorno* son los cruces, los encuentros, las tramas, donde la política revela a la literatura y la literatura puede ser metáfora de la política.<sup>47</sup>

It is suggestive that *Punto de Vista* is notably characterised by the establishment of a lineage into which the magazine placed, and the adoption of a historical perspective in the analysis of literature and other cultural expressions from the national tradition. In this sense, Sarlo's statement about *Contorno* seems to reflect, to some extent, the conception she had of *Punto de Vista*.

In the generational tree proposed by *Punto de Vista*, the generation to which Borges belonged was absent. Borges' group can be referred to as the Sur generation, in reference to the magazine directed by Victoria Ocampo, which brought together the most representative writers and intellectuals of the period, including Borges himself, Adolfo Bioy Casares, Silvina Ocampo, Manuel Mujica Lainez, and Martínez Estrada, amongst many others. If the 1837 generation was present in the genealogy constructed by *Punto de Vista*, there was no reason not to include *Sur*, unless the magazine's editors still endorsed certain prejudices the left had held against Victoria Ocampo and her friends in the immediately preceding years. Not long before, the mounting anti-liberalism of intellectuals prior to the 1976 coup had effectively precluded the appreciation of Borges' writings, as he was seen as a pro-imperialist, anti-nationalist, bourgeois figure, a characterisation that was ultimately transferred to interpretations of his literary work. However, Borges and his generation were increasingly revalorised after the dictatorship, and *Punto de Vista* played an important role in this reassessment; it can therefore be argued that the Sur generation was also part of the lineage traced by *Punto de Vista*,

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<sup>46</sup> Sarlo, 'Los dos ojos de *Contorno*', p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 4.

though not appearing in the editorial of issue 12. As early as issue 5 (March 1979), Piglia published an article on Borges, which he had written some years before for *Los Libros*, but had remained unpublished after his dispute with Altamirano and Sarlo.<sup>48</sup> The text referred, once again, to the Argentine literary tradition, offering an innovative reading of Borges, consistent with the viewpoint the magazine was refashioning at that moment. In his essay, Piglia reconstructed Borges' account of his family lineage: on his mother's side, his ancestors were the first Spaniards to arrive at the River Plate area – criollos, illiterate heroes and warriors; on his father's side, his ancestors were English, literature scholars and protestant pastors. According to Piglia, this lineage was a fiction invented by Borges, which disclosed his conception of literature and, by transposition, of Argentine history.<sup>49</sup> What Piglia observed was that Borges solved the antagonisms of Argentine culture through a fictional lineage:

Esta ficción familiar es una interpretación de la cultura argentina: esas dos líneas son las dos líneas que, según Borges, han definido nuestra cultura desde su origen. O mejor: esta ficción fija en el origen y en el núcleo familiar un conjunto de contradicciones que son históricas y que han sido definidas como esenciales por una tradición ideológica que se remonta a Sarmiento.<sup>50</sup>

There was a double movement in Piglia's analysis: on the one hand he offered a solution to these antagonisms by interpreting Borges as an integrator of dichotomies: the lettered/cultured with the illiterate/warriors. At the same time, Piglia placed Borges in a line of reconciliation between civilisation and barbarism, rather than enlisting him on the European/civilised side of Sarmiento's famous dichotomy, as the anti-liberal left had done. This strategy aimed to deconstruct the prevailing appreciation of Borges in the late sixties by leftist intellectuals, to whom Borges was 'extranjerizante' and uncommitted to national values.

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<sup>48</sup> Allegedly, Piglia had worked on this text in 1974. See Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, II, p. 366.

<sup>49</sup> Ricardo Piglia, 'Ideología y ficción en Borges', *Punto de Vista*, no. 5 (March 1979), 3-6 (p.4). Piglia clarified in this text, giving an example of his particular interest in biographical and autobiographical fictions, that the construction set forth by Borges of his own heritage 'no tiene nada que ver con la verdad de una autobiografía.'

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

As Andrea Pagni has argued, the revalorisation of Borges and *Sur* by *Punto de Vista* was, however, more conspicuous after issue 12.<sup>51</sup> In issue 16, an article by Sarlo analysed Borges' writings that had been published in *Sur* magazine. In this text, she coined the term 'criollismo urbano' to explain Borges' literature, which aimed at a reading that would insert Borges in the national context:

Las notas de Borges marcan [...] esa inflexión que él y Girondo imprimieron a la vanguardia de los veinte, resumible en la pregunta: ¿cómo escribir una literatura que pueda pensarse argentina, desde la perspectiva formal y lingüística de una reflexión sobre las operaciones del discurso?<sup>52</sup>

By stressing the relation between Borges' writing and the Argentine context, Sarlo was challenging the readings of many leftist intellectuals who considered Borges an anti-Argentine writer, detached from the national tradition and only interested in foreign cultures. The following instalment included three articles on *Sur* by Gramuglio, Sarlo and Jorge Warley, respectively. Gramuglio, adopting Raymond Williams' notion of 'cultural group', presented *Sur* as a cohort of writers and intellectuals who attempted both to disseminate European literature in Argentina, and increase the visibility of Argentine literature across the world. Gramuglio's explicit intention was to impugn the characterisation of *Sur* as a representative of the Argentine oligarchy.<sup>53</sup> Although she acknowledged the bourgeois character of the magazine directed by Victoria Ocampo, Gramuglio found it necessary, in order to understand an important episode of Argentina's cultural history, to reconstruct the history of the *Sur* group, a task which had been rejected, for example, by *Contorno*. Sarlo and Warley's texts, which followed Gramuglio's, reinforced the appreciation that *Sur* did not only encourage the introduction of foreign literature to the country, but also actively and extensively promoted Argentine and Latin American literature. Assuming some concepts previously applied to her analysis of

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<sup>51</sup> Pagni, 'Relecturas de Borges y *Sur* por la izquierda intelectual argentina desde los años ochenta', pp. 459-60.

<sup>52</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, 'Borges en *Sur*: un episodio del formalismo criollo', *Punto de Vista*, no. 16 (November 1982), 3-6 (p. 6).

<sup>53</sup> María Teresa Gramuglio, '*Sur*: constitución del grupo y proyecto cultural', *Punto de Vista*, no. 17 (April-July 1983), 7-9 (p.7).

Borges, Sarlo believed that *Sur* had adopted an ‘Americanist’ perspective.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Warley explored the specific notion of national literature endorsed by *Sur*, and the different stances adopted by its members regarding their role as intellectuals. This group of essays represented the first attempt to systematically analyse the magazine directed by Victoria Ocampo, and thereby creating distance from the prejudices with which the left had traditionally assessed this group of writers.<sup>55</sup>

In summary, the initial issues of *Punto de Vista* were characterised by showcasing the readings and interpretative efforts made by these intellectuals during the years they lived in semi-clandestine conditions in order to understand the Argentine literary tradition and, arguably, the Argentine national identity. The selection of the elements in this lineage was not neutral. They were interested in revising the cultural legacy of, most prominently, the cultural elites that had been the dominant voices in Argentine culture since the initial days of the republic. Although they also mentioned FORJA, a group of intellectuals from the Radical Party grouped together by nationalistic and anticolonial ideas in the 1930s, the production of this group was not explored at all in these first issues. The exclusion of FORJA, whose members later ascribed to Peronism, exemplifies the interest of *Punto de Vista* in non-nationalistic intellectual cohorts and non-Peronist intellectuals. Sarmiento, Hernández and *Sur* were, in fact, examples of liberal elites; and, although it would not be accurate to label *Contorno* and Martínez Estrada as liberal, they did not hold particularly nationalistic views, nor were they fully identified with Peronist nationalism. However, *Punto de Vista* did not regard the works of these elites as liberal; on the contrary, they read their legacy as contributions to the shaping of a national cultural identity that mingled different traditions and influences, both local and foreign. The articles in *Punto de Vista* tried to dismantle the civilisation/barbarism dichotomy around which Argentine cultural history has been traditionally understood. In Piglia’s analysis, for example, Sarmiento was no longer the literary liberal against the barbarian *rosismo*, but an intellectual with a second-hand culture who mistranslated French writers. At the same time, *Sur* was no

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<sup>54</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, ‘La perspectiva americana de los primeros años de *Sur*’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 17 (April-July 1983), 10-12.

<sup>55</sup> By the time that these articles were published, John King’s comprehensive study of *Sur*, which also challenges the characterisation of *Sur* as exclusively ‘extranjero’, was published.

longer ‘extranjerizante’, only invested in European culture; it was also seen as a magazine which included American problems, ideas and literature. Borges was no longer a ‘cultural lackey of imperialist powers’, but the master of the very Argentine genre of ‘criollismo urbano’.<sup>56</sup> The readings set forth by *Punto de Vista* in these years ultimately conveyed the interest in the cultural past and in the shaping of a national identity by these elites, of which the canonisation of *Martín Fierro* is an example. The first part of Piglia’s *Respiración artificial* also offers a good example of the interest in Argentine history in relation to a national identity, as the opening sentence of the book, ‘¿Hay una historia?’, suggests.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, the insertion of *Punto de Vista* in this genealogy served a legitimising purpose for its editors, as well as reaffirming a cultural tradition: the editors were not putting forward the project of the magazine ex nihilo, but were legitimate heirs of a cultural tradition, whose last milestone was *Contorno* and the generation grouped around it.

This series of articles, published from the margins of a numbed cultural field and for a scant readership, later developed into canonical readings of the Argentine tradition. The best example of this transformation was Altamirano and Sarlo’s book *Ensayos argentinos: de Sarmiento a la Vanguardia*, published in 1983 by CEAL. The book later became a core text in the study of Argentine literature, and it followed the genealogical line previously explored in the magazine: the generation of 1837, and the foundation of a national literature by Rojas and Lugones, Borges and *Sur*. In the long run, the strategy of reconstructing a lineage adopted during these years established the magazine’s editors as recognised intellectuals. To give an example, *Ensayos argentinos* sold thousands of copies in 1983 and was re-edited on three occasions, the last one in 2016.

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<sup>56</sup> John King, ‘Editor’s Preface’, in Beatriz Sarlo, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge*, ed. by John King (London: Verso, 1993), pp. vii-xviii (p. xiv).

<sup>57</sup> Piglia, *Respiración artificial*, p. 13. Piglia’s novel can be analysed in its gravitation towards Argentine history, which is suggested already in the dedication of the book, which reads ‘A Elías y a Rubén, que me ayudaron a conocer la verdad de la historia’. Elías Semán and Rubén Kristkautsky were the leaders of Vanguardia Comunista who agreed to fund the first issues of *Punto de Vista*.

## The introduction of a new criticism

If the reconstruction of a lineage served a legitimising purpose, there was another goal many cultural magazines sought to fulfil, namely, the introduction of new theoretical approaches. *Contorno* had introduced Sartre's existentialism, *Pasado y Presente* had imported (and translated) Antonio Gramsci's thought, while *Los Libros* brought in theories of psychoanalysis, poststructuralist anthropology and linguistics by introducing the writings of Jacques Lacan, Lévi-Strauss, Althusser and Saussure to the Argentine intellectual field.<sup>58</sup> Although, in the context of the early dictatorship, cultural exchanges between Argentina and foreign countries were less effective than before, the editors of *Punto de Vista* still managed to promote the new methodological tools they had access to. From Europe, they found in the writings of Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu new and fruitful ways of reading culture, a departure from the structuralist views that had dominated literary criticism in Argentina during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, other Latin American theorists, such as the Argentine Tulio Halperín Donghi, the Uruguayan Ángel Rama or the Brazilian Antônio Cândido, were also giving birth to new theoretical approaches to Latin American culture and history. All these influences coalesced in an analytical approach that Sarlo and Altamirano called the 'sociology of literature', a concept that Altamirano explained in the prologue to the above-mentioned *Ensayos Argentinos*:

Nos pareció, así, que no solo era más libre sino también más productivo entender a la sociología de la literatura como un saber dotado de muchos recursos, un saber que para ser crítico debía controlar su propio lenguaje, sus categorías, sus proposiciones, poniéndolos a prueba en los análisis concretos, antes que buscar en éstos el ejemplo de tesis preconstituidas. Entendida de este modo, la sociología de la literatura podía dar lugar al estudio de cuestiones puntuales, pero si quería permanecer abierta a la múltiple fenomenología de

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<sup>58</sup> King, 'Las revistas culturales de la dictadura a la democracia', p. 88.

<sup>59</sup> A central study of the reception of Louis Althusser's structuralism in 1960s Argentina is Marcelo Starcenbaum, 'Itinerarios de Althusser en Argentina: marxismo, comunismo, psicoanálisis (1965-1976)' (PhD thesis, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, 2016). Starcenbaum shows how Althusser, but also other structuralists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Antonio Gramsci, exerted great influence on politics, literary criticism and psychoanalysis in Argentina. It is to be noted that Starcenbaum analyses at length the magazines *Pasado y Presente* and *Los Libros*, as they played a decisive role in the introduction of structuralist theories in Argentina, via intellectuals who are part of the group analysed in this thesis, such as José Aricó, Emilio de Ípola, Oscar Masotta, José Sazbón, and Oscar Terán. In English, a study of reference in Popovitch, 'Althusserianism and the Political Culture of the Argentine New Left'.

lo literario, debía renunciar a concebirse como un paradigma exhaustivo y excluyente del saber sobre la literatura.<sup>60</sup>

The description proposed by Altamirano aimed at challenging those highly structured ways of reading literature, which had dominated criticism in Argentina in the previous decades. Structuralist analyses of literature/culture had traditionally interpreted cultural productions in terms of its relationship with the ‘hidden’ structural system, of which they were a product. The role of the analyst was, thus, to discover that system behind, for example, a novel, regardless of the author’s intentions and the historical context in which the novel was produced. Thus, a novel could be interpreted by the structuralist analyst as a result of the author’s bourgeois ideology, determined by its class position. In opposition to structuralist analysis, the sociology of literature set forth by Altamirano and Sarlo conceived of theoretical concepts as tools whose use was determined by the cultural object itself, and historical elements were largely taken into account. Thus, the sociology of literature avoided reducing analytical approaches to one theory, but, rather, aimed at incorporating a different repertoire of concepts.

The theoretical tools upon which this sociology of literature drew can be traced in *Punto de Vista*’s early period. In this sense, the concept of ‘cultural studies’, and the names of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart, were first coined in Argentina in the central pages of *Punto de Vista* 6, as this issue included a text on cultural studies, as well as interviews with these two British scholars. Sarlo and Altamirano had managed to meet both scholars in England when travelling around Europe earlier that year.<sup>61</sup> The transcripts of these meetings were introduced through a piece written by Sarlo, in which the cultural materialism of Williams and Hoggart was presented as an alternative to structuralist dogmatism. Sarlo highlighted the widespread influence of French structuralism in the Argentine context, suggesting that this predominance had blocked other methodological perspectives.<sup>62</sup> The main criticism against structuralism was that it had fundamentally

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<sup>60</sup> Altamirano and Sarlo, *Ensayos argentinos. De Sarmiento a la vanguardia*, 2nd edn (Argentina: Ariel, 1997), p.12. This edition of *Ensayos Argentinos* will be used hereinafter, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>61</sup> A brief account of this encounter can be found in Carlos Altamirano, ‘Raymond Williams (1921-1988)’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 33 (December 1988), 1-2.

<sup>62</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, ‘Raymond Williams y Richard Hoggart: sobre cultura y sociedad’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 6 (June 1979), 9-18 (p. 9).

blocked the analysis of sociological and historical aspects of culture. *Punto de Vista* was interested in re-conciliating literature with history and its social context of production, which was reflected in the questions Sarlo addressed to Williams: she asked about his historicist point of view, his concept of structures of feeling, his disputes with Saussure and French structuralism and his understanding of the concept of ideology.<sup>63</sup>

In the heterodox compound of concepts *Punto de Vista*'s editors were bringing together, Williams' ideas were very important. On the one hand, they adopted the notion of structures of feeling, a term that synthesized a way of understanding literature that the magazine had explored in its first articles. Used by Williams to characterise the lived experience of life at a particular time and place, 'structures of feeling' has been defined as 'the culture of a particular historical moment [and] it suggests a common set of perceptions and values shared by a particular generation'.<sup>64</sup> As Williams stated in the interview with *Punto de Vista*, the concept was clarified in relation to the notion of ideology, as the affective dispositions involved in the production and the reception of the work of art were not covered by the idea of ideology, which was, in Williams' view, 'colder' than a structure of feeling.<sup>65</sup> The concept was largely incorporated by Altamirano and Sarlo, not only in the articles they wrote for *Punto de Vista* and other magazines, but also as a key concept in books they wrote together in the period analysed here. For example, in their 1980 work, *Conceptos de sociología literaria*, a brief dictionary which defined the concepts involved in their sociology of literature, references to Williams multiplied, not only in the entry specifically dedicated to the concept of structures of feeling, but also in other important entries, such as 'Culture', 'Public' and 'Tradition', where Williams's writings were commented on at length.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, Altamirano

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<sup>63</sup> Sarlo, 'Raymond Williams y Richard Hoggart', p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> Jenny Bourne Taylor, 'Structure of feeling', in *A Dictionary of Culture and Critical Theory*, ed. by Michael Payne and Jessica Rae Barbera (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 670.

<sup>65</sup> Sarlo, 'Raymond Williams y Richard Hoggart', p. 13.

<sup>66</sup> Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, *Conceptos de sociología literaria* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1980).



dedicated a couple of reviews to William's books *Marxism and Literature* and *Culture in their Spanish versions*.<sup>67</sup>

As pointed out in the introduction, Pierre Bourdieu represented another important European influence for *Punto de Vista*, as his sociological approach to culture also influenced, to a great extent, the notion of a sociology of culture. Although Bourdieu was already relatively well known in Argentina by the time *Punto de Vista* published some of his articles, the magazine has been recognised as an important promoter of Bourdieu's theories in the local intellectual field.<sup>68</sup> In the magazine, Bourdieu's main contribution appeared to be the concept of the 'field', or, more specifically, of the intellectual and cultural fields, which opened up an entirely new perspective that allowed the analysis of intellectual groupings in their specific functioning, standing at a distance from earlier Marxist and structuralist approaches. The idea of the field as an autonomous space with a specific structure and rules, in which different actors (writers, artists, the public, art dealers, and editors) occupy different and related positions, was useful for the new viewpoints that the members of *Punto de Vista* were exploring. In another article written by Altamirano and Sarlo during this period, they analysed the emergence of a national intellectual field in 1910s Argentina, using Bourdieu's concept as the touchstone for understanding the cultural production of the period.<sup>69</sup> It has been pointed out that the introduction of the concept of 'field' by *Punto de Vista* not only served the purpose of calling into question other interpretations of the cultural past, but also entailed a deviation from a purely political analysis of literature – which had tended to reduce a work of art to its political functions in previous decades – insofar as Bourdieu considered the cultural field to be a relatively autonomous space.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Carlos Altamirano, 'Raymond Williams: proposiciones para una teoría social de la cultura', *Punto de Vista*, no. 11 (March-June 1981), 20-23; and Carlos Altamirano, 'Cultura. Sociología de la comunicación y de la cultura, de Raymond Williams', *Punto de Vista*, no. 19 (December 1983), 51.

<sup>68</sup> See Baranger, 'La recepción de Bourdieu en Argentina y en Brasil'.

<sup>69</sup> Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, 'La Argentina del centenario: campo intelectual, vida literaria y temas ideológicos', in Altamirano and Sarlo, *Ensayos argentinos*, pp. 69-105. The essay was originally published in *Hispamérica*, no. 25 (1980), a University of Maryland-based journal directed by the Argentine critic Saúl Sosnowski, through whom *Punto de Vista* established connections with North American academia.

<sup>70</sup> Plotkin and González Leandri, p. 226.

Another important contribution was an essay by Bourdieu published in issue 8 (March-June 1980), under the title ‘Los bienes simbólicos, la producción del valor’, which challenged the notion of a work of art’s value as an expression of the author’s genius. For Bourdieu, in capitalist societies, the value of art was, to a great extent, determined by legitimising operations run by a myriad of actors: editors, publishing houses, critics, etc. Bourdieu believed that art produced symbolic capital for those who owned it materialistically or symbolically (e.g. readers and art collectors). Certain art experiences in the 1960s which had tried to challenge the commercialisation of art, Bourdieu argued, developed into new sacred art pieces. However, the French scholar still advocated a way out of the production of the value circuit by rejecting ‘not the rules of the game, but the game itself’, suggesting that the value of the work of art could be preserved from the logic of the system, although he did not specify exactly how.<sup>71</sup> In any case, this aspect of Bourdieu’s critique is very relevant in the study of *Punto de Vista*: Bourdieu’s tenets, on the one hand, enabled the editors of the magazine to understand culture from a sociological perspective, which ultimately opened up a means of studying literature and culture in relation to their historical and social contexts; on the other hand, the concepts of the intellectual field and symbolic capital also provided a conceptual scheme of the functioning of the intellectual sphere into which they were inserted. Therefore, Bourdieu’s concepts also enabled the editors of *Punto de Vista* to explain themselves in regards to their intellectual function. The use that the *Punto de Vista* group made of Bourdieu’s tenets, not only in order to understand culture, but also to understand themselves as intellectuals, should be highlighted. It can be argued that there is a squint exercised by the magazine, but not in the sense that the 1837 generation exercised an *estrabismo*, putting one eye on national culture and the other on foreign culture. *Punto de Vista*’s squint is reflected in the interest the group showed in respect of Argentine intellectual generations, but also their self-definition as intellectuals. This would not be as evident in the first period, but, over the subsequent years, the magazine would exhibit a markedly self-reflective character, and the question of the role of intellectuals – the tenets of Bourdieu

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<sup>71</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘Los bienes simbólicos, la producción del valor’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 8 (March-June 1980), 19-23.

would shape their opinions on this matter – would arise on many occasions, as I will examine.

On a different note, underlying the introduction of European thought, there was also the magazine's quest to establish bridges between local and foreign cultures, following a national intellectual tradition that had always privileged translations as a way of modernising the local intelligentsia. *Punto de Vista*, as I shall argue throughout this dissertation, was perhaps the most relevant vehicle for theoretical modernisation during the years of the democratic transition in Argentina. In other words, the review was also motivated, as its antecedents in the genealogical tree, by a modernising purpose. Therefore, the introduction of Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu, amongst other thinkers, not only served to provide new analytical tools to the magazine's editors, it also legitimised the magazine as a publication that introduced contemporary theories and debates in the local context. To build bridges between foreign theories and the domestic intellectual field has been, in Argentina, a long-standing tradition of little magazines – *Sur* is one of the best examples – and a reason for pride.<sup>72</sup> For example, Sarlo has remarked on the fact that *Punto de Vista* popularised Bourdieu's notion of the intellectual field:

Nosotros tenemos conciencia de que hemos promocionado una serie de líneas de investigación a través de la revista [...]. Cuando en el año '82 yo abrí un suplemento cultural y empecé a encontrar la palabra 'campo intelectual' me dije 'acá algo ha pasado'. De eso somos totalmente conscientes. Somos también conscientes de la circulación de algunos escritores, la revista ha hecho algo por esa circulación publicando notas críticas y presentando líneas de interpretación de la literatura argentina.<sup>73</sup>

Not all modernisation, though, came from Europe. As Altamirano argued in the prologue to *Ensayos argentinos*, Sarlo and him not only owed a debt to overseas intellectuals, they had also been influenced, perhaps more distinctively, by Latin American critics.<sup>74</sup> Tulio Halperín Donghi, Adolfo Prieto, David Viñas, Ángel Rama, and Carlos Real de Azúa were some of the personalities *Punto de Vista*'s members felt

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<sup>72</sup> See footnote 30 in this chapter.

<sup>73</sup> Bocchino and Bueno, p. 183.

<sup>74</sup> Carlos Altamirano, 'Prólogo', in Altamirano and Sarlo, *Ensayos argentinos*, pp. 11-15.

indebted to, not only because of their work, but also because of the contributions they made to *Punto de Vista* in its early years. Ángel Rama sent, from Venezuela, two articles for issues 2 and 9, and was also interviewed by Sarlo for issue 8.<sup>75</sup> Adolfo Prieto and David Viñas were not only an object of study insofar as they had been the founders of *Contorno*, and a recurrent reference in the magazine's articles, but were also interviewed by the magazine on two occasions.<sup>76</sup> In the case of Real de Azúa, he was a prestigious Uruguayan intellectual whose essays – most of them published in the renowned magazine *Marcha* (1939-1974), as had also been the case for Rama's early works – had greatly influenced his generational peers.<sup>77</sup> Although he had died in 1977, *Punto de Vista* published one of his main articles on Latin American culture in 1983.<sup>78</sup> Influenced by Real de Azúa – evident, for example, in a shared distinctively baroque-style writing – Halperín Donghi's work was also a fundamental reference for *Punto de Vista*. One of the most prestigious historians in Argentina, Halperín Donghi was interviewed a number of times by the magazine during this period, and his books were frequently reviewed by the editors.<sup>79</sup> Over the years, Halperín was going to become a colleague and friend of the

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<sup>75</sup> See Ángel Rama, 'Encuentro sobre sociología de la lectura', *Punto de Vista*, no. 2 (May 1978), 12; Ángel Rama, 'Argentina: crisis de una cultura sistemática', *Punto de Vista*, no. 9 (July-November 1980), 3-10; and Beatriz Sarlo, 'Tradición y ruptura en América Latina. Entrevista a Ángel Rama y Antonio Cornejo Polar', *Punto de Vista*, no. 8 (March-June 1980), 10-14.

<sup>76</sup> Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, 'Nosotros y ellos. David Viñas habla sobre *Contorno*', *Punto de Vista*, no. 13 (November 1981), 9-12; and Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, 'Literatura/crítica/enseñanza de la literatura' [interview with Adolfo Prieto], *Punto de Vista*, no. 16 (November 1982), 7-9.

<sup>77</sup> Halperín Donghi has summarized the project of *Marcha* in an article he dedicated to Real de Azúa, where he stated that: 'Es demasiado pronto para que se haya estudiado qué significó *Marcha*, no sólo en el Uruguay, en esos años; es quizá demasiado tarde para que el recuerdo baste para saberlo, sino a unos pocos: un semanario que ofrecía del Uruguay del cada vez menos plácido otoño de la era batllista una imagen crítica, pero implícitamente enaltecedora, gracias al testimonio de su mera presencia en el que entre otras cosas el análisis y la crítica cultural alcanzaba una extrema riqueza y sutileza, y se ofrecía cada viernes en pasto a una masa de lectores inesperadamente vasta, sin que éstos se fatigaran al parecer jamás de todo ello. Un remedo democratizado del público letrado (de curiosidad más vasta que disciplinada, pero enormemente receptiva) que Hispanoamérica había conocido al filo del siglo, y que había dado el contorno necesario a una legión de ensayistas y cronistas capaces de estilizar en formas literariamente refinadas la experiencia inmediata de sus lectores, se ofrece así a Real de Azúa y le hace posible desarrollar su obra dando rienda suelta a tendencias que son desde el comienzo muy poderosas en él.' Tulio Halperín Donghi, 'Carlos Real de Azúa: la ávida curiosidad por el mundo', *Revista Iberoamericana*, no. 160-161 (July-December 1991), 893-902.

<sup>78</sup> Carlos Real de Azúa, 'Los males latinoamericanos y su clave. Etapas de una reflexión', *Punto de Vista*, no. 18 (August 1983), 17-28.

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, Tulio Halperín Donghi, 'Cinco respuestas sobre historia argentina', *Punto de Vista*, no. 10 (November 1980), 3-5; *Punto de Vista*, 'Enseñanza y práctica de la historia. Reportaje a Tulio Halperín

Punto de Vista group. Thus, these critics not only promoted new ways of studying culture that were as insightful and productive as overseas currents of thought, they also constituted the intellectual camaraderie that surrounded the magazine once its editors became more well-known in the intellectual field.

The issue that best summarises the importance given to Latin American new criticism was published in June 1980. It contained interviews with some of the most prestigious literary critics of the region: Ángel Rama, Antônio Cândido and Antonio Cornejo Polar. Rama had been responsible for the literary section of *Marcha*, and became a much-respected literary critic for his ground-breaking analysis of Latin American literature, especially for his studies on the boom novels.<sup>80</sup> After the 1973 military coup in Uruguay, Rama went into political exile and moved to Venezuela, where he created and directed Biblioteca Ayacucho, a state-owned editorial initiative that published Latin American classical texts and contemporary literary studies.<sup>81</sup> The members of *Punto de Vista*, mainly Altamirano and Sarlo, established links with Rama through Boris Spivacow, the director of CEAL, during the early years of the dictatorship.<sup>82</sup> This connection explains why already in issue 2 (May 1978), an article by Rama on levels of literacy in Caracas was published in the magazine.<sup>83</sup>

The other scholars interviewed were Antônio Cândido, a literary critic and one of the most important Brazilian intellectuals, and Antonio Cornejo Polar, a prestigious

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Donghi', *Punto de Vista*, no. 18 (August 1983), 29-31. See also, Luis Alberto Romero, 'Política, nación y Estado en la Argentina del siglo XIX', *Punto de Vista*, no. 11 (March-June 1981), 29-33. This last article was a celebratory review of *Proyecto y construcción de una nación (Argentina 1864-1880)*, edited by Halperín Donghi.

<sup>80</sup> An overview of the contributions of Rama, via *Marcha*, to literary criticism in the 1960s is Jorge Ruffinelli, 'Ángel Rama, *Marcha* y la crítica literaria latinoamericana en los 60s', *Scriptura*, no. 8-9 (1992), 119-28.

<sup>81</sup> An overview of the origins and development of Biblioteca Ayacucho, and the leading role of Rama in it, is Jessica Gordon-Burroughs, 'Monuments and Ephemera: The Biblioteca Ayacucho', *A Contracorriente*, vol. 11, no. 3 (Spring 2014), 90-118.

<sup>82</sup> For a study of the contributions of Rama, Cornejo Polar and Sarlo to cultural criticism see Patricia D'Allemand, *Hacia una crítica cultural latinoamericana* (Ann Arbor, MI: Latinoamericana Editores, 2001). D'Allemand argues that these critics, along with José Carlos Mariátegui and Alejandro Losada, contributed to the consolidation of a form of cultural criticism original from Latin America independent from the metropolitan academic centers. She pays particular attention to Rama's concept of transculturation and Cornejo Polar's idea of heterogeneity.

<sup>83</sup> See Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, 'Prólogo a la segunda edición', in Altamirano and Sarlo, *Ensayos argentinos*, pp.7-8.

Peruvian literary critic and founder of *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*.<sup>84</sup>

Sarlo had met the three scholars when attending a conference on Latin American literature at the University of Campinas in Brazil. She has stressed the importance of this meeting for the magazine, as she established personal and professional relationships with these figures:

Antônio Cândido fue la otra gran persona que yo conocí en ese momento, que es un príncipe de la crítica literaria brasileña y el primer promotor de la etnografía. [...] Inmediatamente me hizo sentar a su mesa. Ángel Rama puso su botella de whisky en la mesa la primera noche y conocí a esas dos personas que fueron muy importantes y muy influyentes para mí. [...] Y también estaba en esa reunión un crítico del área andina de la literatura latinoamericana que era Antonio Cornejo Polar. [...] Eran tres figuras descomunales de la crítica literaria latinoamericana, en un momento en que la crítica literaria era una disciplina de primer rango [...] Que yo llegara con esas noticias a *Punto de Vista* y con esas relaciones fue muy importante.<sup>85</sup>

*Punto de Vista* thus included the interviews with Cândido, Cornejo Polar and Rama by Sarlo, which mainly revolved around the analysis of Latin American literature and its methods: the question about the social function of the text and the introduction of a historical perspective in literary criticism structured the exchange with Cândido. Without referring to foreign theories or authors, Cândido largely challenged the formalist viewpoint, and the a priori application of theories. He argued in favour of a perspective similar to the sociology of literature mentioned above, in which literary analysis would take into account, in the first place, the text in its social and historical context of production. The interview also explored the definition of a Latin American literature in its relation to foreign influences, and Cândido's ideas demonstrated that theories about literature could emerge in the Latin American context, especially when applied to local literature. Cândido, for example, rejected the idea that a Latin American literature could be defined by its autochthonous content or amount of national reality expressed in it. This standpoint rejected the parameters of localism or cosmopolitanism in order to study Latin American literature. In other words, the idea of a national literature as a reflection of the

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<sup>84</sup> A sign of the intellectual connections established during this period, both Cornejo Polar's magazine and *Escritura*, the Venezuela-based journal directed by Rama, were advertised in the pages of *Punto de Vista* from issue 8 on. Later on, Altamirano and Sarlo wrote the prologue of an edition of Esteban Echeverría's selected writings edited by Biblioteca Ayacucho.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Beatriz Sarlo (Buenos Aires, 6 March 2017).

local, creole or indigenous elements, was rejected as much as the idea of a national literature adapted, in terms of its form or content, to cosmopolitan standards. In the interview, Cândido proposed that:

Tanto las obras más ‘cosmopolitas’ como las más ‘localistas’ deben ser estratégicamente eficientes. Una literatura latinoamericana no existe a partir del momento en que pueda estilizar la realidad de América. Este es solo un presupuesto básico. Existe desde el momento en que se demuestra capaz de fecundar los instrumentos de otras culturas matrices y aplicarlos a América. Creo que la literatura nacional comienza cuando se inaugura una tradición de producir, de manera sistemática, obras estéticamente válidas.<sup>86</sup>

Cândido argued against the notion that the defining element of a national literature was – to invoke Borges – its amount of ‘local colour’.<sup>87</sup> On the contrary, a national literature was defined by the broader concept of ‘aesthetic value’, which was not reduced to either aspect of form or content. Close to Jean Franco’s ideas in the inaugural text of *Punto de Vista*, Cândido acknowledged that European influences had been decisive, but also reconfigured and transposed in Latin America under the influence of local culture. I argue that this perspective was relevant insofar as it proposed a de-enshrinement of traditional notions about Latin American literature, according to which this literature was divided between European-oriented and local-oriented productions. According to this approach, a text produced in the Latin American context was susceptible to analysis without reducing it to foreign influences. This discussion intersects with the question of the quality of Latin American literature in relation to its European models and the traditional association of Latin American culture with reproduction, belatedness, and second-handiness. Although it was acknowledged that Latin American countries, and therefore Argentina, occupied a peripheral position in the world, the inferiority complex of local literature in relation to the European tradition was no longer accepted, and now Latin American literature was

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<sup>86</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, ‘Para una crítica latinoamericana. Entrevista con Antônio Cândido’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 8 (March-June 1980), 5-9 (p. 8).

<sup>87</sup> Borges opposed to the notion that a national literature is defined by its content, namely the amount of ‘local colour’ contained in its literary pieces, in his emblematic essay ‘El escritor argentino y la tradición’, a text which was based on a lecture Borges delivered in 1953 and later published in Jorge Luis Borges, *Discusión* (Madrid: Alianza, 1997), pp. 188-203. In this key text of Argentine literary criticism, Borges argued against his detractors, who accused him of using universal themes, and not Argentine motifs, in his literature. Using different argumentative strategies, Borges claimed that Argentine literature, as all other literatures, should not be defined by the ‘argentineness’ of its themes, and that all writers are entitled to make use of universal, local or foreign themes in their literary production.

studied as an original corpus. In this vein, it is interesting to quote a passage from Piglia's diaries where he highlights this prouder vision of American literature (in his case, of Argentine literature) in relation to other models:

Desde el origen del Salón Literario de 1837 se pensó en una cultura desajustada del presente, que llegaba tarde a la situación contemporánea. Lo que irrita es mi opinión de que nosotros, los escritores que empezamos a publicar en estos años, rompimos ese desajuste y estamos hoy en la misma temporalidad literaria que los escritores europeos o norteamericanos. La indignación deriva del hecho de que la cultura ha sido el espacio en el que más pausadamente se ha disimulado y desviado la relación con los países centrales. Hemos visto que después de Borges y de Cortázar las cosas habían cambiado. Hoy cualquiera de nosotros, Puig por ejemplo, puede exhibir la contemporaneidad plena de su escritura y ya no hace falta insistir en el 'atraso' de nuestra situación. Se trata de no aceptar esa mistificación y usar toda la literatura contemporánea sin ningún tipo de 'diferencia' ni inferioridad.<sup>88</sup>

Borges and Cortázar, in the Argentine context, had managed to be as contemporary as the writers of 'central' countries. The essay Rama wrote for issue 9 (July 1980), which studied the specific features of what he called 'cultura subatlántica' (a reference to the cultural development of Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil), followed a similar argumentative line. In Rama's view, the question of the difference between local and foreign elements took a similar form to Cândido's, as he stated that:

Una cultura de la modernidad no es, como se ha tendido a pensar respecto a su presencia en América, una mera imitación desvaída de culturas foráneas, un amasijo de influencias importadas, trasplantadas tal cual, sino una cultura que, liberada de pesadas amarras al pasado remoto y a su tradición gracias a azares históricos, consigue organizarse coherentemente a partir de los elementos de que dispone y evolucionar hacia un punto focal que está situado en el futuro y no en el pasado.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, Rama defined the 'subatlantic culture' as a modern kind of culture with specific features and innovative elements, and not as an inferior copy of foreign cultural production.<sup>90</sup> In the same way that *Punto de Vista* set forth a re-interpretation of Sarmiento and Borges' legacies by establishing distance from theoretical approaches reductive of

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<sup>88</sup> Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, II, pp. 82-83.

<sup>89</sup> Rama, 'Argentina: crisis de una cultura sistemática', p. 4. (Italics in the original).

<sup>90</sup> At the moment of the interview, 1970, Rama was living in the United States, working at the University of Maryland. In 1983, he tragically died in a plane accident along with his wife Marta Traba, a renowned Argentine art critic. *Punto de Vista* published two obituaries in their memory written by Susana Zanetti and Saúl Sosnowski in issue 20 (May 1984).



literature to European versus American features, the Latin American literary critics also proposed an original and innovative way of studying literature by creating distance from this dichotomy and proposing to study Latin American literature independently of its foreign or local influences.

In summary, the series of exchanges with Williams, Hoggart, Rama, Cândido and Cornejo Polar published in this first period summarises the magazine's search for new critical tools. In the first place, history gained a much larger space, compared to previously dominant forms of criticism: the history of ideas, institutions, intellectuals, and culture structured most of the early discussions published in the review. As stated, the interviews with William and Cândido posed the specific question of history in contrast to the structuralist and post-structuralist traditions. John King has synthesised this shift prompted by *Punto de Vista* in its early years: 'Ahora, por ejemplo, Tulio Halperín Donghi parece más interesante que Althusser; Ángel Rama más complejo que Jauretche; Raymond Williams más claro que Kristeva.'<sup>91</sup> Thus, the predominant criticism on the 1960s, inspired by structuralism, Marxism and psychoanalysis, was progressively replaced by a new criticism that enabled the editors of *Punto de Vista* to study cultural experiences in less structured ways, while also taking into account historical and concrete aspects of cultural production that had been traditionally put in second place. In the second place, a large space was given to authors and theories emerging in the Latin American context, who were considered equals to their European peers. This was probably explained by geographical reasons and affinities in terms of the object of study: *Punto de Vista* was inclined to study Argentine history, Argentine ideas, Argentine literature or Argentine psychoanalysis, and people like Rama, Viñas or Halperín Donghi were mandatory references for the study of this national culture. At the same time, the importance given to the definition of Latin American culture pointed to an affirmation of the value of what was produced in southern latitudes of the world.

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<sup>91</sup> King, 'Las revistas culturales de la dictadura a la democracia', p. 92.

*Punto de Vista* was not only a magazine focused on literary criticism. As the masthead 'revista de cultura' suggested, it was defined as a magazine about culture, and therefore disciplines such as fine arts, cinema, philosophy, history, and psychoanalysis were repeatedly explored, particularly during these initial years in which political expression was precluded. Although the spectrum of topics and interests this list suggests is potentially infinite, *Punto de Vista* selected the material according to certain implicit principles. The first criterion they followed during the dictatorship years was to reject any form of support for the military dictatorship. Although in the first eleven instalments there was no explicit rejection of the regime, there was absolutely no validation of it, either. Moreover, the simple publication of the magazine entailed a critical stance in regards to the dictatorship: if the military aimed at installing a unifying, restricted and deprived cultural discourse, *Punto de Vista* was going to rescue from the past, but also from the margins of culture, elements that challenged the impoverished cultural discourse of the dictatorship. In effect, the military dictatorship imposed a unified discourse intolerant of any form of dissidence, or, as Francine Masiello defined it, 'se creó un programa institucional para desterrar todo sentido de otredad.'<sup>92</sup> However, certain areas of culture that had managed to dodge the cultural censorship were commented in the pages of the review. For example, in issue 2 Sarlo commented on a series of Reiner Werner Fassbinder films screened at the Goethe Institute in Buenos Aires, and that same issue included reviews on films by Alain Resnais and Hans Syberberg. This ultimately revealed that censors were not as interested in non-commercial cinema as they were in more mainstream films that they could censor either entirely or partially.<sup>93</sup> Another example of the attention paid to cinema in the magazine was a series of essays in the initial issues, which aimed at defining formal concepts in film studies.<sup>94</sup> The author of these articles,

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<sup>92</sup> Francine Masiello, 'La Argentina durante el Proceso: Las múltiples resistencias de la cultura', in *Ficción y Política*, ed. by Jara and Vidal, pp. 11-29 (p. 13).

<sup>93</sup> For an overview of how the military censored films in Argentina see Avellaneda, *Censura, autoritarismo y cultura*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>94</sup> Raúl Beceyro, 'Cine y narración', *Punto de Vista*, no. 6 (June 1979), 33-34, and Raúl Beceyro, 'Cine e ironía', *Punto de Vista*, no. 8 (March-June 1980), 36-39.

Raúl Beceyro, was then a young filmmaker who throughout the years would contribute regularly to the magazine until its final issues.<sup>95</sup> In a sort of natural division of labour that the magazine adopted, cinema and photography were usually, although not always, analysed by Beceyro, and later on, on his return from exile, by filmmaker Rafael Filippelli. As in the case of literature, not every form of cinema was worthy of analysis for the editors of *Punto de Vista*: auteur cinema was privileged over commercial films, which still in the 1970s was not necessarily a sign of elitism, as only a few years earlier Buenos Aires had been the epicentre of a popularity boom for Ingmar Bergman's films. This would change after 1983, as cultural consumerism patterns changed hand in hand with the social fragmentation the dictatorship left behind. *Punto de Vista* persisted, however, in the interest paid to non-mainstream cultural expressions.

Although the main articles remained the central contributions, the 'Libros' section, in which newly published books were reviewed, was essential to the magazine as it was imperative to comment on the latest publications, providing at the same time ways of reading for its public. This section was not limited to literature: books on history, psychoanalysis, philosophy and other disciplines were commented upon, usually by members of staff. For the first issue, for example, Altamirano commented on David Rock's *El radicalismo argentino* under the pseudonym 'Carlos Molinari'; Vezzetti reviewed a book by the French psychologist Maud Mannoni; and Sarlo wrote an analysis of Natalio Botana's *El orden conservador* under the name 'Silvia Niccolini'. Lastly, also for the first issue, Ricardo Piglia – using his alter-ego name Emilio Renzi as a pseudonym – reviewed G. E. Hudson's *Allá lejos y hace tiempo*, the memoirs of the English writer on his childhood in the Argentine countryside.

During these initial years, the magazine also published a number of texts about art: a comment on exhibitions in Europe for the year 1978; reviews of the São Paulo Art biennales of 1978 and 1979 (one of them authored by the Latin American scholar Néstor García Canclini); and a review of the Benson & Hedges Arts Prize, which included interviews with Américo Castilla (art critic and organiser of the Prize), and artist Luis Bénédict (awarded the first place in the drawing competition). María Teresa Gramuglio

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<sup>95</sup> Beceyro also became a member of the editorial board in 2004, until 2008.

and her husband Juan Pablo Renzi were the most prominent and knowledgeable writers for the art section. Renzi usually offered advice in regards to the selection of the images that illustrated each instalment. The visual aspect of the magazine was very relevant and carefully designed. Typically, an artist was selected for each issue, whose illustrations were distributed throughout the pages of the instalment: mostly, Argentine artists were selected, although sometimes foreign ones were included. In subsequent years, the magazine continued to select one artist for each instalment, although reviews on art exhibitions appeared less frequently.

Lastly, it is notable that, under the dictatorship, poems, short stories and fragments of novels were published in the magazine, which responded to the aim of including authors who, in many cases, had had to flee the country. The literary pieces published under this time period were authored, in the majority of the cases, by Argentine writers: Mario Szichman in issue 1, followed by Carlos Dámaso Martínez and Alberto Perrone, Kato Molinari, Rodolfo Alonso, Enrique Lihn, Alicia Dujovne Ortiz, Amílcar Romero, Héctor Piccoli, Andrés Rivera, Raúl Vera Ocampo, Juan José Saer, Noemí Ulloa, Jorge Di Paola, Enrique Fierro, Elvio Gandolfo, Hugo Gola, Marilyn Contardi, Daniel Samoilovich and Hebe Uhart. Except for Lihn and Fierro (who were, respectively, Chilean and Uruguayan) all of them were young Argentine writers.

A few words must be added about one of *Punto de Vista*'s preferred writers, Juan José Saer, who contributed short stories, poems and essays to the publication, as he was another fellow in the social space surrounding the magazine. The veneration showed by *Punto de Vista* to Saer exhibits the magazine's strategy of maintaining an independent view of literature in respect to literary trends, but also the avant-garde gesture that *Punto de Vista* had always sought to cultivate, insofar as Saer wrote against all trends and traditions. Saer was born in 1937 in Santa Fe, the birthplace of *Punto de Vista* members María Teresa Gramuglio and Nicolás Rosa. By 1978, when Saer was first mentioned in *Punto de Vista*, he had already published four novels and four collections of stories (his first novels had been published by Jorge Álvarez Editor), but was still a relatively unknown writer. In his youth, he had been involved in a group of students and writers called 'vanguardia literaria rosarina', in which Rosa and Gramuglio also participated, and

whose intellectual point of reference was Adolfo Prieto.<sup>96</sup> Prieto had included Saer as one of the essential contemporary Argentine writers in *Diccionario básico de literatura argentina* in 1968, which belonged – as stated – to the collection *Capítulo*, edited by CEAL. That same year, Saer was awarded a scholarship to finish his studies in Paris, where he moved to and continued to live until his death in 2005. He published *Cicatrices* (1969) and *El limonero real* (1974) during his initial years in France, two novels that earned complimentary reviews by Gramuglio and Sarlo, respectively, in *Los Libros*.<sup>97</sup> Some years earlier, in 1965, Altamirano had written a celebratory review of Saer's *En la zona* for the communist journal *Hoy en la cultura*.<sup>98</sup> Despite all the recognition Saer received from literary critics, his work remained scantily read by the public. His writing style was difficult, the pace of the narration was usually slow and laden with descriptive passages, and it was difficult to find attractive writing of this nature in the midst of political agitation. As Miguel Dalmaroni has stated in an extensive study of Saer's reception in Argentina, the young writer seemed 'unreadable' to most people, including the revolutionary intellectuals, the enthusiasts of Latin American boom literature, Borges' followers and haters, or commercial publishing houses.<sup>99</sup> *Punto de Vista*'s members, who considered Saer's writings exceptional, challenged the indifference of the public and highlighted Saer's work from the pages of the magazine.<sup>100</sup> In issue 3 (July 1978), they published a review – allegedly written by Piglia – on Saer's collection of stories, *La mayor*. Saer was presented in this text as one of the best contemporary writers and a figure of rebellion against 'los ritmos de la moda o los árbitros del gusto'.<sup>101</sup> A year later, María

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<sup>96</sup> Dalmaroni, 'El largo camino del silencio al consenso', p. 615.

<sup>97</sup> María Teresa Gramuglio, 'Las aventuras del orden', *Los Libros*, no. 3 (September 1969), 5. Beatriz Sarlo, 'Saer, Tizón, Conti. Tres novelas argentinas', *Los Libros*, no. 44 (January-February 1976), 3-6.

<sup>98</sup> Dalmaroni, 'El largo camino del silencio al consenso', p. 630.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 613.

<sup>100</sup> The scarce critical studies available on Saer's works demonstrate the extent to which the writer remains a tricky figure of Argentine literature. The two most relevant works on Saer are Julio Premat, *La dicha de Saturno: Escritura y Melancolía en la Obra de Juan José Saer* (Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo, 2002) and Beatriz Sarlo, *En la Zona* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2016). Both texts remark the difficulties in the reception of Saer's novels and praise, at the same time, the coherence of his oeuvre. For Sarlo, Saer is the 'other' great Argentine writer of the twentieth century, Borges being the principal one. However, Sarlo's statement suggests a continuity with the 'operation' (to use Dalmaroni's expression) set forth by *Punto de Vista* in relation to Saer.

<sup>101</sup> *Punto de Vista*, 'Punto de Vista señala: *La mayor*', *Punto de Vista*, no. 3 (July 1978), 18.

Teresa Gramuglio wrote a long essay on Saer for issue 6, which included the transcription of some of his unpublished poems. Gramuglio celebrated his works and denounced his silencing in the literary field: ‘El sentido de una obra ya vasta, aunque, con pocas excepciones, sistemáticamente ignorada por lectores y críticos en la Argentina’.<sup>102</sup> Later on, Sarlo wrote a review of Saer’s *Nadie nada nunca*, published in Mexico in 1980, where she celebrated ‘la perfección de la escritura de Saer’.<sup>103</sup> Also, by initiative of *Punto de Vista*’s members, Saer’s books *El limonero real*, *La mayor*, *Cicatrices*, and *Narraciones* were re-edited by Centro Editor de América Latina between 1981 and 1983.<sup>104</sup> The efforts made to rescue Saer from the rejection of mainstream criticism only bore fruit, though, towards the end of the 1980s, when he was finally acknowledged as one of the main Argentine writers of the twentieth century.<sup>105</sup>

Although Saer’s is perhaps the best example of the way in which *Punto de Vista* set out to dictate what to read, it was not until after the democratic transition in 1983 that the magazine consolidated its prestige. We are still in the early years of dictatorship, when the magazine used to sell only 500 copies on average, whereas after 1983 sales varied between 1000 and 1300.<sup>106</sup> However, during these first years, the authority of *Punto de Vista* was slowly but steadily consolidated, while the names of its editors started to become important. Towards the end of 1981, repression was diminishing and censorship was not as strict as before. In issue 12, *Punto de Vista*’s first editorial was published, a strong condemnation of dictatorship was openly expressed, and a more defined political stance started to shape the publication.

## Conclusion

With the difficulties and obstacles represented by the predominant censorship and repression, the editors of *Punto de Vista* still managed to publish a review that, notably in

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<sup>102</sup> María Teresa Gramuglio, ‘Juan José Saer: el arte de narrar’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 6 (July 1979), 3-8 (p.3).

<sup>103</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, ‘Narrar la percepción’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 10 (November 1980), 34-37 (p. 34).

<sup>104</sup> Dalmaroni, ‘El largo camino del silencio al consenso’, p. 621.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Beatriz Sarlo (Buenos Aires, 6 March 2017).

its beginnings, revised Argentine cultural history, advanced a theoretical modernisation of cultural criticism, and explored areas of culture in a manner that escaped censorship. In spite of the restrictions imposed by the military on political participation, and even group meetings, the editors of the review maintained a space for intellectual and political debate, although the latter was not directly conveyed in the pages of the magazine. A visitor from the United Kingdom who met the Punto de Vista group in 1980 accounted for the kind of discussions held by the editors in those years:

They had begun to publish a cultural journal, *Punto de Vista*, to test the limits of what could be discussed openly or indirectly in that period. [...] At a memorable dinner which began sedately but then raged throughout the night, they started off discussing my research topic and then began to question the meaning of the sixties and early seventies in Argentina, that elusive search to bring together the political and cultural vanguards. They explored the limitations of populist nationalism, of theoretical models, from Che to Mao, from Althusser to Lacan. They discussed the hopes and aspirations of a generation which had seemingly been dashed in the mid-seventies and speculated on the way forward, the attempt to reconstruct a fragmented intellectual field, both at home and in exile. This was the task of the 1980s, as Argentina returned slowly to democracy.<sup>107</sup>

This short quotation condenses both the original goals of the magazine and the discussions that in the years after 1981 would appear more frequently, namely, the revision of their political activism and the intellectual concerns that had dominated the 1970s. The modification of the political situation in 1981 opened a space for the introduction of new themes and political views in the magazine's editorial line, which are to be explored in the next chapter.

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<sup>107</sup> King, 'Editor's preface', p. x.

### Chapter 3: The late dictatorship years (1981-1983). Issues 12-19

Los exiliados desencantados han estado aquí un mes. Han vuelto «realistas» y democráticos, muertas ya todas las ilusiones que cultivaron en su juventud.<sup>1</sup>

*Punto de Vista* 12 is a watershed in the magazine's history. The titles on the cover were a foretaste of the issue's concerns: 'El primer imperialismo norteamericano', 'Análisis estructural del discurso político', and 'Literatura y crítica en América Latina'. The unprecedented inclusion of the word 'política' on the cover was not a fortuitous event, it was rather the expression of a political voice that, albeit veiled in the first instalments, had been present since the beginnings of *Punto de Vista*. On the first page of this twelfth instalment, there was an editorial article in which, for the first time, the magazine was properly introduced, and the censorship exerted by the military government was denounced. Although the magazine's scarce readership already identified *Punto de Vista* as an anti-dictatorial publication, now the confrontational stance was more overtly expressed. On the second page, also for the first time, the names of the actual editors of *Punto de Vista* were made public: the 'consejo de dirección' was comprised of Carlos Altamirano, María Teresa Gramuglio, Ricardo Piglia, and Hugo Vezzetti, and the director of the magazine was Beatriz Sarlo. The editors perceived at the time that the military regime was facing both internal and external crises, leading to a slight reduction of cultural censorship and to the rise of a number of dissident voices.

An important change in the political sphere was marked by the end of General Videla's term as president and his replacement by General Roberto Viola in March 1981, who began his tenure by cherishing hopes of political liberalisation. After Viola's elevation as president, internal conflicts divided the military: while those aligned with Viola aimed at establishing a dialogue with political parties in order to open a road to democracy, the group aligned with General Leopoldo Galtieri was committed to the regime's prevalence and rejected any political openness.<sup>2</sup> Galtieri's faction prevailed and

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<sup>1</sup> Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, III, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Rock, *Argentina 1516-1982*, pp. 373-74.



forced Viola to resign in late December, which brought about Galtieri's elevation as President. Galtieri inherited an economy that was showing signs of asphyxia, mainly due to the neoliberal policies implemented by Alfredo Martínez de Hoz, in charge of the Ministry of Economy during Videla's term. The liberalisation of the economy encouraged by Martínez de Hoz had significantly reduced Argentina's capital reserves, leading to an acute devaluation of the local currency and a fall in gross domestic product, manufacturing output, and real wages.<sup>3</sup> By 1980, Argentina's foreign debt had quadrupled, exports had fallen by 3.9 percent, and imports had grown 43 percent. The economic policies implemented by Martínez de Hoz, which had mainly benefited foreign capital and transnational companies, had negative consequences for Argentina's socio-economic structure in the long run.<sup>4</sup> The de-nationalization of the economy, the acute concentration of capital, and the growth of poverty and social inequalities that characterised the period 1976-1983 could not be entirely reversed in the years that followed the dictatorship. Luis Alberto Romero has pointed out in relation to this period of Argentine history, that the dictatorship seeded economic 'time bombs', which later exploded in the successive crises of 1985, 1989, 1995, and 2001.<sup>5</sup>

However, not only did the economic crisis and internal conflicts explain the increasing weakness that the military government faced by 1981; in addition, external pressures, especially regarding Human Rights violations, were undermining the military's ambition of remaining in power. In September 1979, the Inter American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR) visited Argentina at the invitation of the military government. Videla and his collaborators believed that this visit would restore a positive image of the government and show the Argentines that the repression had been legal. Their plan was to discredit the claims raised by local Human Rights associations, such as Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, and the Servicio de Paz y Justicia, an organisation whose

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 373.

<sup>4</sup> Amalia Eguía and others argue that many analysts identify the 1976 dictatorship as the initial moment of the destruction of the Welfare State and the expansion of poverty in Argentina, which had continuity in the 1990s, and has not yet been reversed. Eguía and others, 'La pobreza en Argentina: nuevas realidades, nuevos conceptos', in *La Argentina democrática: los años y los libros*, ed. by Antonio Camou, María Cristina Tortti and Aníbal Viguera (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2007), pp. 241-80.

<sup>5</sup> Luis Alberto Romero, 'Veinte años después: un balance', in *La historia reciente*, ed. by Novaro and Palermo, pp. 273-82 (p. 273).

founder and director, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1980.<sup>6</sup> *Punto de Vista* published an interview with him in issue 16 (November 1982), which revolved around the issue of democracy, a word that would appear more frequently in the discussions published in the magazine during the period analysed in this chapter. The IACHR visit, however, did not go as planned by the military. In March 1980, the organization made public a report that denounced the ongoing repression in Argentina, and the torture, killing and disappearance of people. The report reinforced the claims of Human Rights associations insofar as it brought international attention to them. Although the military denied these accusations and the local newspapers maintained their complicity with the regime, the IACHR visit became a recurrent topic of discussion and gave prominence to the denunciations of Human Rights violations.<sup>7</sup> The military thus found themselves locked in an acute political and economic crisis. As a result, political parties, foreseeing a possible political opening, started to organise the transition by founding a 'Multipartidaria' platform in 1981, an alliance comprised of the main political parties.<sup>8</sup>

The military, flanked by internal and external conflicts, embarked on a last confrontational adventure as they attempted to attract political support through the Falklands/Malvinas War. The military not only assumed that the army was prepared for such a confrontation against the United Kingdom, they also expected to be backed by the

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<sup>6</sup> Although Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo were the most visible organisations, other Human Rights associations in Argentina also played a very important role in the denunciation of the crimes perpetrated by the military. Carlos Acuña and Catalina Smulovitz have divided these organisations in three: a) Those whose members were affected by repression (Madres de Plaza de Mayo, Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos por Razones Políticas, and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo), b) Organisations that provided assistance to victims of repression and their families (Servicio de Paz y Justicia and Movimiento Ecuaménico por los Derechos Humanos), and c) Organisations that provided legal aid or gathered all the information available (Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, and Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre). Carlos Acuña and Catalina Smulovitz, 'Militares en la transición argentina: del gobierno a la subordinación constitucional', in *Juicio, castigos y memorias. Derechos humanos y justicia en la política Argentina*, ed. by Carlos Acuña (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1995), pp. 21-99 (p. 35).

<sup>7</sup> For a complete account of the IACHR visit to Argentina in 1979 see the report issued by the Centro de Investigaciones Políticas, 'La CIDH en Argentina', <[http://www.cipol.org/pdfs/CIDH\\_analisis\\_final.pdf](http://www.cipol.org/pdfs/CIDH_analisis_final.pdf)> [accessed 16 October 2017].

<sup>8</sup> The Multipartidaria platform comprised the following political parties: Unión Cívica Radical (Radical Party), Partido Justicialista, Partido Intransigente, Partido Demócrata Cristiano, and Movimiento de Integración y Desarrollo.

United States, based on the help they had received in the past from this North American country. The United States, however, backed the United Kingdom's position. On April 2 1982, Argentina's armed forces took control of Puerto Argentino/Port Stanley in a declaration of war. At first, the legitimisation goal pursued by the military was accomplished, as that day tens of thousands gathered in the Plaza de Mayo to support the invasion. The majority of the political parties, whether from the left or the right, also endorsed Argentina's offensive and only a few isolated voices repudiated the military manoeuvre. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel raised his voice against the war, while Ricardo Alfonsín, a politician from the Radical Party who would later run for the Presidency in 1983, also opposed the conflict, distancing himself from the official position of his own party. The conflict ended in June 1982, when Argentina surrendered and the British re-gained control of the islands, a defeat that ultimately forced the Argentine military to call elections. The Falklands/Malvinas War remained one of the central topics of intellectual discussion for the Punto de Vista group, and will be analysed in more detail below.

In this context, censorship became gradually porous, and dissident expressions began to surface. First, some publications increasingly challenged the government and denounced the crimes committed under the dictatorship period. A paradigmatic case was the weekly *Humor registrado* (1978-1999), a rather critical publication, taking into account the limits to freedom of speech still standing in the early 1980s. This humorous magazine was characterised by its comics and strip cartoons, which parodied celebrities, topical issues, politicians, and the military.<sup>9</sup> Although the magazine sustained a mocking and grotesque tone, each instalment included a long interview, from which the humorous tone was usually absent. In these interviews, writers, journalists, politicians or local cultural figures expressed, in the majority of the cases, their opposition to the regime. Although the magazine endured political pressure from the government, it was so popular that the military did not dare to shut it down – by 1980 *Humor* sold around 60,000 copies.<sup>10</sup> Less popular periodicals also rather explicitly opposed the military, such as

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<sup>9</sup> For a history of *Humor* from the perspective of its own director, see Andrés Cascioli, *La revista Humor y la dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> *Humor*, 'Para lectores no primerizos', *Humor*, no. 31 (January 1980), 3.

*Nueva Presencia* (1977-1993), a weekly publication directed by Herman Schiller and linked to the unorthodox Jewish community of Buenos Aires, which denounced the disappearances of people and even published opinion columns by a political prisoner, Hernán Invernizzi. Towards the end of the dictatorship period, *El Porteño* (1982-1993) also became a significant critical voice. Published on a monthly basis, and explicitly founded as a review that would challenge the censorship of the period, this left-leaning magazine focused on issues that were rather new for the Argentine left, such as feminism, homosexuality, drugs, and rock music. Although *El Porteño* would undergo many changes over the years, it maintained its left-leaning editorial line and its interest in new and alternative tendencies until its final issues. This publication was also the most direct antecedent of a very important newspaper for the left in the late 1980s and 1990s, *Página 12*, founded in 1987 by journalist Jorge Lanata, who began his career at *El Porteño*.

Second, these were the years in which national rock music became the most salient form of cultural resistance, especially for young people.<sup>11</sup> The new rock wave of the early 1980s comprised bands such as *Serú Girán*, *Los Redonditos de Ricota*, *Sumo*, and *Virus*, all of which started as alternative music groups that would later become the main figures of the so-called ‘rock nacional’ genre. This musical wave was strongly identified with the values of youth. The lyrics authored by Charly García, *Serú Girán*’s leader, are a patent expression of the desires, frustrations, and rejection of the past sensed by young people in the last years of the dictatorship. For instance, García’s song from 1982, ‘Yo no quiero volverme tan loco’, denounced the climate of repression at the time (‘yo no quiero vestirme de rojo/ yo no quiero vivir paranoico/ yo no quiero ver chicos con odio/ yo no quiero sentir esta depresión’). And the song ‘Los dinosaurios’, in which ‘dinosaurios’ was an implicit reference to the military, denounced the disappearances of people, while expressing at the same time the anxiety of an entire generation in relation to the repressive context: ‘Los amigos del barrio pueden desaparecer/ los cantores de radio pueden desaparecer/ la persona que amas puede desaparecer / pero los dinosaurios van a desaparecer’.

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<sup>11</sup> For an account of the links between national rock, youth, and the resistance to dictatorship in the early 1980s see Pablo Vila and Paul Cammack, ‘Rock Nacional and Dictatorship in Argentina’, *Popular Music*, vol. 6, no. 2 (May 1987), 129-48.

In summary, the visibility of Human Rights movements, the emergence of new publications and the multiplication of rock concerts pointed at a certain cultural experience that offered a more straightforward resistance to censorship. In this setting of timid political openness, *Punto de Vista* published eight new issues from 1981 to 1983, which were characterised by a new confrontational stance against the government and which made explicit the magazine's principles. The editorial in issue 12, the first one ever to appear in the magazine, conveyed the position adopted by the Punto de Vista group in relation to the political situation:

En marzo de 1978, apareció el primer número de *Punto de Vista*. Su publicación venía, de algún modo, a ejercer un derecho: abrir un ámbito de debate de ideas y elaboración cultural. El derecho a disentir nos parecía, entonces y ahora, una condición básica de la cultura, amenazada material y políticamente. [...] Intentamos entonces reconstruir algunos eslabones del campo intelectual, y los doce números de la revista se propusieron defender, en la práctica, el espíritu crítico y nuestro derecho a la divergencia. Esto es, reivindicar la libertad de pensar, escribir, difundir ideas diferentes: el derecho al punto de vista.<sup>12</sup>

For the first time, the magazine articulated clearly its purpose and origins, while the editorial board was fully disclosed and the use of pseudonyms was definitively abandoned. If the magazine's political voice had only been opaquely revealed through the selection of topics and authors before this issue, from the twelfth instalment onwards, the magazine's political positions would be explicit.

Mainly through its editorials, *Punto de Vista* articulated a coherent political voice and its members were regarded as an intellectual group drawn together by political affinities, as I will examine later in this chapter. While Altamirano and Sarlo largely set the political line of the magazine, disagreements were rare within the editorial board.<sup>13</sup> However, towards the end of 1982, Piglia resigned his place in the magazine. Unlike the conflict that led Piglia to leave *Los Libros*, this time no explanation was given for his departure. His name was simply removed from the list of editors. However, a letter he

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<sup>12</sup> Punto de Vista, 'Punto de Vista', *Punto de Vista*, no. 12 (July 1981), 2.

<sup>13</sup> In Hugo Vezzetti's account: 'Yo tuve durante mucho tiempo un lugar que claramente era secundario. Los que tenían ahí la posición más política eran Beatriz y Carlos.' Interview with Hugo Vezzetti (Buenos Aires, July 2014).

sent to his friend José Sazbón, living in Venezuela as a political exile, suggests that the reasons behind his resignation were rather political:

Decidí correrme un paso al costado de *Punto de Vista*. Renuncié (como suele decirse) al comité de dirección. Las diferencias, literarias y políticas, se han ido agravando en los últimos meses. Siempre existieron, pero en los primeros años el eje pasaba por agruparse y resistir a la dictadura, crear un espacio de unidad en el que las diferencias fueran secundarias. Ahora, cuando se empiezan a definir proyectos y tendencias y se abren otros debates, prefiero mantener la independencia. Para decirlo con retórica ‘oriental’: durante una etapa prevaleció la unidad, ahora las contradicciones han cambiado (han empezado a cambiar) y tienen más peso las diferencias.<sup>14</sup>

As expressed in the letter, it was simpler to share opinions against the dictatorship than reaching agreements on concrete political options. In particular, Piglia rejected the distancing of his friends from earlier political stances. For most members of the *Punto de Vista* group, and also for a great number of left-wing intellectuals who survived the dictatorship, their defeat led them to abandon the utopias of social change, a project which had previously led them to embrace the project of a socialist revolution.

Progressively, the revolutionary goal no longer articulated the discourse of intellectuals, while debates regarding the question of democracy and how to achieve a better society by democratic means, rather than insurrectional or revolutionary ones, gained steam. Piglia, on the contrary, was not willing to make such an ideological shift and he criticised his peers for becoming reformists.<sup>15</sup> Arguably, Piglia was never fully committed to the project of *Punto de Vista*, and he particularly criticised the sociological analysis of literature that Altamirano and Sarlo privileged. As one of the entries of his diaries reads: ‘Debate con Beatriz Sarlo y con Altamirano sobre *Punto de Vista*. No acepto formar parte del comité de dirección. ¿Por qué? Diferencias en la concepción de la literatura.’<sup>16</sup> However, he preserved his friendship with the editors, especially with

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<sup>14</sup> Letter from Ricardo Piglia to José Sazbón (11 November 1982). Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas, Fondo José Sazbón, FA44.

<sup>15</sup> In another letter from 1985, Piglia wrote to Sazbón: ‘Yo discuto y me peleo bastante con los amigos, el reformismo no es mi fuerte como te imaginarás.’, Letter from Ricardo Piglia to José Sazbón (15 February 1984). Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas, Fondo José Sazbón, FA44.

<sup>16</sup> Ricardo Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, III, p. 118.

Altamirano and Vezzetti who, humorously, used to call him ‘el último de los bolcheviques’.<sup>17</sup>

Two issues after Piglia’s departure, a new member joined the staff, Hilda Sabato, an Argentine historian who had finished her PhD at the University of London, after which she received special recognition in Argentina for her dissertation on the agrarian structure of nineteenth century Argentina.<sup>18</sup> Upon her return to Buenos Aires, Sabato joined the Programa de Estudios de Historia Económica y Social Americana (PEHESA), an organisation founded in 1978, which provided refuge to historians who had been expelled from national universities. *Punto de Vista* 18 included a text authored by the PEHESA group – comprised of the historians Ricardo González, Leandro Gutiérrez, Juan Carlos Korol, Luis Alberto Romero and Sabato herself – about the culture of popular sectors in Argentina. With the incorporation of Sabato in *Punto de Vista* 17 (1983), the editorial staff would remain the same until 1984, when two Argentine intellectuals returning from exile, Juan Carlos Portantiero and José Aricó, also joined the staff.

With regard to the format, the magazine did not suffer major changes. It was still printed in black ink on white paper and it featured the same design, although the covers of these eight issues were less minimalist than the first twelve ones and were slightly smaller in size. From issue 13 onwards, articles were categorised in sections, such as ‘Política nacional’, ‘Historia argentina’, ‘Literaturas’, ‘Sociología’, and ‘Poesía’. The traditional ‘Libros’ section, where new books were reviewed, was enlarged from four to seven or eight books. Also, a new section called ‘Libros recibidos’ was incorporated. This new section provided a brief overview of the latest books and magazines either published in Argentina or abroad. This latter feature revealed a gradual recovery of the publishing industry in Argentina, but also demonstrated that more books were arriving in the hands of the magazine’s editors. Another noticeable change was the advertising of new

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Hugo Vezzetti (Buenos Aires, July 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Hilda Sabato received the second prize in the ‘José Luis Romero’ competition in 1982, while José Aricó received a special mention for his work *La hipótesis de Justo* in the same competition. The jury was comprised of four renowned historians: Tulio Halperín Donghi, Richard M. Morse, Juan Antonio Oddone, and Gregorio Weimberg. See *Punto de Vista*, ‘Premio internacional de historia José Luis Romero’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 14 (March-July 1982), 38.

magazines: *Crítica y Utopía*, *Brecha*, *Cine Libre*, *Nueva Sociedad*, *Último Reino*, and *Icaria* were some of the brand-new magazines promoted in the pages of *Punto de Vista*. Some of them were marginal publications that steadily gained prestige throughout the years, while some others did not survive the democratic transition. A long-lasting publication was *Crítica y Utopía*, a social sciences review directed by Francisco Delich, who would later be in charge of normalising the University of Buenos Aires during the democratic transition, a process which will be examined in the next chapter.<sup>19</sup> *Nueva Sociedad* also became a very important academic journal on political science and international politics, and it is still published in Argentina today.

In the concert of magazines, *Punto de Vista* was increasingly growing into a key publication. For issue 12, for example, the literary critic Susana Zanetti – who worked with Altamirano and Sarlo in CEAL – interviewed Jean Franco about the situation of Latin American literature. In her answer, Franco stressed the importance of Latin American critics, magazines and literary journals for United States academia, placing *Punto de Vista* as an equal to *Escritura* and *Revista de Crítica Latinoamericana*:

Creo que también cumplen un papel fundamental las nuevas revistas literarias de América Latina. Me refiero a la *Revista de Crítica Latinoamericana* que dirige Antonio Cornejo Polar en el Perú, a *Escritura*, de Ángel Rama y, naturalmente, a *Punto de Vista* en la Argentina y a varias de México, país en el que algunas editoriales – Era, Siglo XXI – promueven esas corrientes críticas que señalé, ese nuevo tipo de sociocrítica basado realmente en cuidadosas lecturas abarcadoras de todos los niveles del texto.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, magazines that *Punto de Vista*'s editors regarded some years before as role models, such as *Escritura* and *Revista de Crítica Latinoamericana*, were now placed at the same level as their publication (see Chapter 2). A few pages below this interview, an advert of *Escritura* announced the inclusion of articles by Altamirano and Sarlo in its latest instalment. *Punto de Vista* was, therefore, moving from a marginal place to occupy a central position within the field of cultural magazines.

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<sup>19</sup> The normalisation of the UBA entailed, in first place, the restoring of the university's autonomy. This implied that the State could no longer intervene in the decisions taken by the university's authorities as regards the selection of academic staff, the syllabi and the rules of conduct within the institution. A detailed account of the normalisation of the UBA in the 1980s is Francisco Delich, *808 días en la Universidad de Buenos Aires* (Eudeba: Buenos Aires, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Susana Zanetti, 'Jean Franco: ideología, crítica y literatura en América Latina', *Punto de Vista*, no. 12 (July-October 1981), 11-15 (p. 13).



In addition to the production of *Punto de Vista*, some of its members organised semi-clandestine workshops during these years. These groups were not exclusive to the intellectuals analysed here, as most scholars who were expelled from universities and remained in Argentina organised parallel institutions to sustain an active intellectual environment. These groups were collectively known as the ‘catacombs university’, which mainly consisted of study groups for young students looking for better-quality education than the one provided by public universities, and for professors who had been expelled from their positions at public universities.<sup>21</sup> For example, a group of Argentine philosophers who refused to teach at UBA, founded the Sociedad Argentina de Análisis Filosófico (SADAF), which initially offered seminars and workshop, and later became an official institution of analytic philosophy. A student who attended SADAF’s activities, the feminist philosopher Diana Maffía, described her experience in this group in the following terms: ‘Cuando llegó la dictadura, las actividades de SADAF eran una isla de racionalidad y cordura en medio de la oscuridad.’<sup>22</sup> Maffía’s statement describes not only the situation of universities in Argentina under the dictatorship, but also the positive appreciation of these semi-clandestine groups.

In literature, the two most renowned study groups were those organised by Josefina Ludmer and Beatriz Sarlo. Many young graduates, who would later become renowned writers, critics and artists in Argentina, attended their workshops. The literary critic Daniel Link provided an account of his own experience at Sarlo’s workshop and a list of those who attended it in *Una lectura: una vida*. It is worth citing it at length:

En 1981, si no recuerdo mal, empecé a estudiar, los sábados, con Beatriz Sarlo, en los cursos parauniversitarios que dictaba en la oficina de *Punto de Vista*. Llegué a Beatriz un poco por azar y otro poco por pobreza. Enrique [Pezzoni] nos había recomendado, a Delfina [Muschietti] y a mí, que siguiéramos algún curso para completar nuestra formación en los temas que las instituciones no podían tocar por entonces. Las opciones eran dos: Josefina Ludmer o Beatriz

<sup>21</sup> For an overview of these clandestine study groups, particularly those in which literature was discussed, see Analía Gerbaudo, ‘Literatura y activismo intelectual en la Argentina de los 80. Notas a partir de *Lecturas críticas*. Revista de Investigación y Teorías Literarias’, *Catedral Tomada. Revista de crítica literaria latinoamericana*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2013), 18-31. See also Hilda Sabato, ‘Sobrevivir en dictadura: las ciencias sociales y la universidad de las catacumbas’, in *A veinte años del golpe. Con memoria democrática*, ed. by Hugo Quiroga and César Teach (Rosario: Homo Sapiens, 1996), pp. 27-58.

<sup>22</sup> Diana Maffía, ‘El análisis filosófico y la universidad de las catacumbas’, *Actas XV Congreso Nacional de Filosofía* (2010), <<http://dianamaffia.com.ar/archivos/El-an%C3%A1lisis-filos%C3%B3fico-y-la-universidad-de-las-catacumbas.pdf>> [accessed 28 April 2018].

Sarlo. A los cursos de Josefina fueron Alan Pauls, Adriana Rodríguez Pérsico, Mónica Tamborena, Andrés Di Tella, entre tantos otros. A los cursos de Beatriz, Carlos Mangone, Andrés Di Tella, Graciela Montaldo, Sergio Chejfec, Delfina y yo. [...] Antes de aceptar alumnos en sus cursos, Beatriz exigía una entrevista previa, un poco para decidir si se trataba de un espía de los servicios de inteligencia y otro poco para evaluar la ‘motivación’ del postulante. Me aceptó (yo transpiraba copiosamente porque, por lo poco que sabía de ella, le tenía miedo) y comencé con ella, para mi sorpresa, un curso sobre el método formal.<sup>23</sup>

Most of the people listed by Link went on to develop important careers in Argentine culture; among them, we can find renowned writers (Alan Pauls and Sergio Chejfec), literary critics (Adriana Rodríguez Pérsico, Graciela Montaldo, and Daniel Link himself) and a filmmaker (Andrés Di Tella). Although these groups were, as expressed in Link’s account, selected and semi-clandestine, they were a seminal experience for many relevant members of the generation that followed the Punto de Vista group. These groups were responsible for maintaining a space of culture and knowledge in Argentina, challenging the government’s imposition in national universities of anachronistic and conservative syllabi.<sup>24</sup>

Two crucial features that *Punto de Vista* adopted during the late dictatorship years have been sketched above. First, the magazine embraced a more overt political stance during the first 1980s, a stance that characteristically adopted social democrat nuances. Second, the magazine became a central publication during these years, and its editors were regarded as a compact intellectual group. Both aspects will be analysed further in the pages below through the exploration of three important episodes of the period 1981-1983: the exile connection, that is, the communication established between the Punto de Vista group and other intellectuals living in exile (in particular, those in Mexico), the discussions around the Falklands/Malvinas War, and the constitution of *Punto de Vista* as a compact intellectual group, recognised by other agents in the intellectual field.

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<sup>23</sup> Link, *Una lectura: una vida*, pp. 79, 80, 87, 88.

<sup>24</sup> In parallel to the catacombs university, different centres for social studies (centros de estudio) were created during these years. For an overview of these new centres see Pagano, ‘Las ciencias sociales en la dictadura argentina (1976-1981)’.

## The exile connection

In October 1981, Roberto Guevara and Julio Santucho, two members of the Argentine guerrilla group Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) living in Mexico as political exiles, kidnapped the daughter of an important Mexican businessman and niece of Pablo Emilio Madero, presidential candidate for the Partido Acción Nacional. The episode had international repercussions as these *guerrilleros* were related to two important figures of the moment: Roberto Guevara was Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara’s brother and Julio Santucho was brother of Mario Roberto Santucho, the ERP’s founder. The Mexican secret services quickly freed the woman and captured the kidnappers, who were imprisoned for eight months, after which they were released due to a lack of evidence to convict them. Allegedly, the kidnapping was not an action strictly orchestrated by the guerrilla group, as it was organised by the ERP’s members without the consent of their leaders. This created uneasiness within the large community of Argentines in Mexico, who then expected the government to reduce its hospitality towards Argentine exiles.<sup>25</sup>

The Mexican government had welcomed Argentines, Chileans and Uruguayans fleeing their home countries for political reasons, providing jobs and accommodation for them. In contrast to other destinations where the inclusion of exiles was more problematic, in Mexico most Argentines settled in, had children and enjoyed good living standards. Those with professional backgrounds continued and even improved their careers. As an example, the founder of *Pasado y Presente* José Aricó, who fled to Mexico in 1976, worked for the publishing house Siglo XXI, where he directed the influential collection of Marxist bibliography *Biblioteca del Pensamiento Socialista*.<sup>26</sup> He also taught, alongside his intellectual partner Juan Carlos Portantiero, at the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), a university focused on social sciences with different branches across Latin America. In this context, the kidnapping carried out by the two *guerrilleros* showed a disrespectful attitude towards Mexican hospitality, which also led

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<sup>25</sup> Pablo Yankelevich, *Ráfagas de un exilio. Argentinos en México, 1974-1983* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 2009), p. 136-37. Yankelevich’s *Ráfagas de un exilio* is to the date the most comprehensive account of the Argentine exile in Mexico.

<sup>26</sup> Juan Carlos Portantiero, ‘Las desventuras del marxismo latinoamericano’, in José Aricó, *La hipótesis de Justo. Escritos sobre el socialismo en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 1999), pp. 7-8

the Mexican opposition to complain about the generosity with which exiles were treated. However, the Mexican government did not persecute the rest of the exiles, as declared by a public official: ‘no por seis terroristas vamos a culpar a todos los argentinos en México.’<sup>27</sup>

In spite of Mexican generosity, not all Argentines fully adapted to the new country. A vast majority of them met regularly in exile associations, and were mainly interested in the news coming from their home country.<sup>28</sup> Some Argentines even boasted about never having a taco or tasting spicy food while in Mexico.<sup>29</sup> In particular, two associations of exiles played a very important role in grouping the Argentines together. There was the Comité de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Argentino (COSPA), comprised of left-leaning Peronists, most of them with working class backgrounds, chaired, though, by Rodolfo Puiggrós, a rather intellectual figure who had served as chancellor of the University of Buenos Aires during Héctor Cámpora’s short presidency in 1973. The other group was the Comisión Argentina de Solidaridad (CAS), with a more intellectual composition, and considered by COSPA as elitist and apolitical. The CAS was chaired for many years by former member of *Contorno* Noé Jitrik.<sup>30</sup>

Towards 1980, COSPA was losing members, while the CAS grew in number, reaching 300 members that year. It was inevitable that sub-groups were created within such a large organisation, and in 1979 one of these sub-groups published the most emblematic magazine of exiles from the period: *Controversia para el examen de la realidad argentina* (1979-1981).<sup>31</sup> *Controversia* has been considered the only systematic publication by exiles and the only initiative that went beyond the denunciation of the Argentine dictatorship, as it developed significant political analyses from new theoretical

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<sup>27</sup> Yankelevich, p. 135.

<sup>28</sup> A testimony of the experience of living in Mexico as a political exile can be found in Tununa Mercado, *En estado de memoria* (México: Dirección de Literatura/Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1992). In her book, this Argentine writer describes how her compatriots did not mingle much with Mexicans and rather maintained their Argentine traditions, habits and manners of speaking among themselves.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Alberto Díaz (Buenos Aires, 5 May 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Yankelevich, pp. 138-49.

<sup>31</sup> The members of *Controversia* were José Aricó, Sergio Bufano, Rubén Sergio Caletti, Nicolás Casullo, Ricardo Nudelman, Juan Carlos Portantiero, Héctor Schmucler, Oscar Terán, and Jorge Tula.

perspectives.<sup>32</sup> Most of the socialists in *Controversia* were former members of *Pasado y Presente* (see Chapter 1) who had fled to Mexico in 1976. As most of them met again in exile, the group maintained an intellectual bond, as expressed in Aricó's words when describing *Controversia*'s origins:

A la distancia, no creo que haya sido el azar el que nos hiciera escoger México como sitio de nuestro exilio. Acaso operó eso que, por no tener otra manera de definirlo llamamos metafóricamente 'astucia de la razón', o quizás todo se debió al espíritu de fraternidad gregaria que durante tanto tiempo nos mantuvo juntos no obstante nuestras diferencias, o tal vez fuera el deseo inconsciente de quedarnos en América como una forma de mantener las amarras con el país que jamás antes pensamos abandonar; no sé qué ocurrió pero el hecho es que a México fuimos a parar casi la totalidad de los que en los años sesenta constituimos el grupo *Pasado y Presente* y que desde entonces mantenemos sólidos lazos personales y culturales.<sup>33</sup>

*Controversia* was, as the quotation suggests, another episode in the history of this group of intellectuals. The thirteen issues published between 1979 and 1981 singularly brought together two ideologically distanced groups that coincided in their Mexican exile: the socialists, which included Aricó and his former colleagues from *Pasado y Presente*, and the Peronists, such as Nicolás Casullo and Rubén Caletti. Two fundamental agreements cemented the relationship between the Peronists and the socialists. One was the shared opinion that, as participants of the Argentine new left in the 1960s and 1970s, they had suffered a defeat. While in the early 1980s some sectors of the intellectual left still believed in the proximity of an non-capitalist socio-economic system, *Controversia*'s members were in the process of resigning to the victory of the military over their revolutionary program, which also entailed the revision of previous ideas.<sup>34</sup> Such an acknowledgement was very explicitly stated in the editorial article that opened *Controversia*'s first issue:

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<sup>32</sup> 'Creo que [*Controversia*] fue el esfuerzo más sostenido, político, reflexivo y de jerarquía que produjo el exilio argentino en cualquier parte, tanto sobre la problemática de los Montoneros, el ERP, el peronismo, el marxismo, la democracia en lo nacional, como introduciendo en sus páginas muchos textos, ensayos y artículos de las revisiones y crisis que estaba viviendo el campo de la izquierda internacional' Nicolás Casullo's testimony, in Jorge Boccanera, *Tierra que anda. Los escritores en el exilio* (Buenos Aires: Ameghino, 1999), pp. 106-7.

<sup>33</sup> José Aricó, draft of a text for *Rinascita* magazine (17 January 1986). Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Biblioteca María Aricó, Archivo José María Aricó, Documentos, Caja 3, Folio 21.

<sup>34</sup> Verónica Gago has explored the thematisation of the defeat in *Controversia* in Verónica Gago, *Controversia: una lengua del exilio* (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Nacional, 2012).

Muchos de nosotros pensamos, y lo decimos, que sufrimos una derrota, una derrota atroz. Derrota que no solo es la consecuencia de la superioridad del enemigo sino de nuestra incapacidad para valorarlo, de la sobrevaloración de nuestras fuerzas, de nuestra manera de entender el país, de nuestra concepción de la política.<sup>35</sup>

Not only did the editorial acknowledge that the military had overpowered them; but it also demanded an urgent revision of previous political conceptions and the adoption of new perspectives, which brings us to the second point upon which *Controversia*'s members agreed: an unprecedented valorisation of democracy. If, prior to the 1976 coup, this intellectual group considered democracy as secondary to the revolutionary goal – or, alternatively, as only secondary in relation to the ultimate goal of establishing a socialist rule – now the formal aspect of democracy was prioritised. The characteristic dichotomy that had been popularised by the Argentine new left in the 1970s, liberation versus dependency, was now displaced by a new formulation, democracy versus authoritarianism, in the pages of *Controversia*.<sup>36</sup>

The articles published in this emblematic magazine tackled a wide variety of subjects, such as the crisis of Marxism, the social and economic analysis of Argentina's recent history, and the state of socialism in Latin America. But the most salient stance conveyed in the pages of the magazine was the endorsement of democracy and the rejection of any form of authoritarianism as democracy developed into the prism through which political processes were appraised. This second aspect of *Controversia* prefigured to a certain extent the discussions actively promoted by these intellectuals during the democratic transition of 1983, when the problem of democracy in Argentina became utterly central.

Back in Argentina, *Punto de Vista*'s editors were revalorising democracy in the same terms as those displayed in *Controversia*. Although this political viewpoint was not

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<sup>35</sup> *Controversia*, 'Editorial', *Controversia*, no. 1 (October 1979), 2.

<sup>36</sup> See Matías Farías, '¿Qué hacer con el peronismo? La democracia entre el socialismo y el populismo a través de *Controversia* (1979-1981)', in *Intersticios de la cultura política latinoamericana: los movimientos sociales*, ed. by Ana Britos Castro, Paola Gramaglio and Sandra Lario (Córdoba: Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 2011), p. 208. Farías' text is an essential study of *Controversia*, which he analyses as representing a frontier between the 1970s and the 1980s with regard to the Argentine intellectual field. He pays particular attention to the replacement of the revolutionary vocabulary by a new socialdemocrat language in this publication.

extensively conveyed in the pages of *Punto de Vista* under the dictatorship, once democracy was re-established the editorial articles would strongly endorse democracy and propose political views that were closer to social democracy than to orthodox Marxism. However, *Controversia* was not simply a magazine the editors of *Punto de Vista* received with interest, it was now seen as a parallel magazine to *Punto de Vista*, rather than a reference publication. In Sarlo's account:

En México, encontramos un sector de gente que estaba pensando estas cuestiones de un modo más articulado y complejo. Nos resultó un paralelo muy extraordinario porque cotejábamos lecturas, y eran los mismos libros los que estábamos leyendo aquí y allá.<sup>37</sup>

Although *Controversia* approached its topics from the perspective of the social sciences and *Punto de Vista* always maintained a strong focus on cultural analysis, they shared political viewpoints, especially with regard to the shift towards social democracy. The connection with *Controversia* was also personal, as during the last years of dictatorship some members of *Punto de Vista* travelled to Mexico and met with the members of the Mexico-based magazine. This new intellectual fellowship was crucial for the history of *Punto de Vista*.

The connection established between the two magazines dates back to 1979, when María Teresa Gramuglio and Juan Pablo Renzi travelled to Mexico to visit Gramuglio's sister, living in Mexico as a political exile.<sup>38</sup> During this trip, they met with the members of *Controversia* and gave them some instalments of *Punto de Vista*, which the exiles received with astonishment. In Altamirano's account of that encounter, they were amazed by the fact that a magazine like *Punto de Vista* was being published under the repressive Argentine context.<sup>39</sup> A year later, Altamirano travelled to Mexico to meet the *Controversia* group personally and encourage collaboration between the two magazines. Upon his return, he published a review on José Ingenieros' *Antiimperialismo y nación* for

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<sup>37</sup> García and Mercader, 'Tozuda modernidad: entrevista a Beatriz Sarlo'. Portantiero recalls the exchanges with Sarlo and Altamirano in the same terms: 'Momentos importantes fueron los viajes de Beatriz Sarlo y Carlos Altamirano. [...] Ese cruce fue interesante, porque ahí nos encontramos con que había gente acá que estaba pensando lo mismo que nosotros.' Mocca, p. 96.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Carlos Altamirano (Buenos Aires, 16 July 2014).

<sup>39</sup> 'Ellos estaban en primer lugar asombrados de que se pudiera sacar una revista en Buenos Aires y que la revista tuviera ese tono.' Interview with Carlos Altamirano (Buenos Aires, 16 July 2014).

*Punto de Vista* 9 (July-November 1980), an edition that had been only distributed in Mexico and contained a prologue by Oscar Terán, one of *Controversia*'s editors.<sup>40</sup> Altamirano's article was particularly complimentary of this prologue, and his review was mostly centred on Terán's text, rather than on José Ingenieros'.<sup>41</sup>

In 1981, Altamirano and Sarlo travelled to Mexico and met the editors of *Controversia* again. Although the Mexico-based magazine was not being published by then, the personal and intellectual relationship between *Punto de Vista* and, particularly, Aricó, Portantiero and Terán, was consolidated during this trip. Terán, who would some years later share the 'cátedra' of Argentine and Latin American Thought at the UBA with Altamirano, wrote two important articles for *Punto de Vista* 12 and 17 (July 1981 and April 1983, respectively) from Mexico. The first article traced the origins of the first anti-imperialist discourse in Latin America to the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>42</sup> The second text was a critique of a book which conveyed an endorsement of the dictatorship, Víctor Massuh's *La Argentina como sentimiento*.<sup>43</sup> A third text by Terán was also published in issue 17 (April-July 1983). It was a review of *El discurso jurídico*, a collection of articles by different authors about psychoanalysis and epistemology. Terán's review would later unleash a heated controversy with José Sazbón (exiled in Venezuela) in the pages of *Punto de Vista*, which revolved around the concept of Post-Marxism, an important dispute that will be analysed later in this chapter.

More relevant, though, was Juan Carlos Portantiero's contribution in issue 14 (March 1982), which consisted of an extended article on the subject of democracy and nation in early twentieth century Argentina. Although it made a reference to a distant period in history, the article aimed at providing a contemporary reflection, as it tackled many relevant questions that leftist intellectuals in Argentina were exploring at the time.<sup>44</sup> First, the text described the process of nation-building at the beginning of the twentieth

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<sup>40</sup> A recent study of Oscar Terán's life and works is Omar Acha, *Cambiar de ideas. Cuatro tentativas sobre Oscar Terán* (Buenos Aires, Prometeo, 2017).

<sup>41</sup> Carlos Altamirano, 'Ingenieros: el mérito de saber', *Punto de Vista*, no. 9 (July-November 1980), 41-42.

<sup>42</sup> Oscar Terán, 'El primer imperialismo latinoamericano', *Punto de Vista*, no. 12 (July 1981), 3-10.

<sup>43</sup> Oscar Terán, 'El error Massuh', *Punto de Vista*, no. 17 (April-July 1983), 4-6.

<sup>44</sup> Juan Carlos Portantiero, 'Nación y democracia en la Argentina del novecientos', *Punto de Vista*, no. 14 (March 1982), 3-6.



century. Like other texts published in *Punto de Vista* during these first years, which also referred to the beginning of the century as relevant to the establishment of a national literature, Portantiero's essay recreated the frantic changes brought about by massive immigration in Argentina between 1880 and 1920. It also explored the questions about nationality that the immigration wave inevitably posed for the Argentine elites. Second, the text explained the different stances adopted by political parties towards immigration, focusing on the Socialist Party, the anarchist movement, and the Radical Party, three political movements which had promoted the participation of workers in politics and the nationalisation of immigrants. However, Portantiero voiced an objection against the Socialist Party's practices which, to some extent, seemed to extend to his own previous militancy in the Communist Party. He argued that, in spite of the democratic spirit with which the Socialist Party had incorporated working class immigrants to politics, its leaders had held a 'pedagogical' view, according to which the masses had to be indoctrinated, and were therefore considered passive subjects.<sup>45</sup> This pedagogical mission entailed an elitist conception of politics according to which leaders and intellectuals found themselves at the vanguard of political movements. For Portantiero, the Socialist Party had not only held an elitist view, but had also disregarded certain emotional aspects of politics that Peronism later exploited among the working classes, ultimately leading to the failure of socialism in Argentina. In his final comment, however, Portantiero criticised those intellectuals who believed the history of working classes in Argentina to have begun with Peronism, and not before.

In summary, the essay had a double intention: while it criticised the strategy followed by the Socialist Party in its origins (a criticism that seemed to apply to the author's own personal history), it rescued the democratic spirit, albeit an imperfect one, of Argentine socialism in contrast to the less-democratic Peronist tradition. Although it referred to the past, this discussion was very relevant in the context of its publication, when Portantiero and his peers reviewed their former conception of intellectuals as educators or leaders of the masses. The article was a very relevant contribution to *Punto de Vista*, not only because the text provided an insightful analysis of the development of

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<sup>45</sup> Portantiero, 'Nación y democracia en la Argentina del novecientos', p. 6.

democracy throughout Argentina's history, but also because Portantiero was at the time a very important intellectual figure and his contribution consolidated the collaboration between those in Mexico and the Punto de Vista group. So important was this fellowship that when the Argentines living in Mexico returned to Argentina towards 1983, Aricó and Portantiero automatically joined *Punto de Vista*'s editorial staff. And a year later, in 1984, the two groups – *Punto de Vista* and some members of *Controversia* – founded the Club de Cultura Socialista (CCS), an association of intellectuals which played a key role in the intellectual field of the democratic transition, a topic which I will analyse in detail in Chapter 4.

During the dictatorship, *Punto de Vista* also established links with other intellectuals in Europe. One of them was David Viñas, founder of *Contorno* and one of the most influential figures in Argentine literature (see Chapter 1). At the beginning of the dictatorship, Viñas went to live in exile, first in Mexico and then in several European countries. He fled Argentina with his wife Adelaida Gigli, his son, and his daughter, but the latter two were disappeared a few years later when they returned to Argentina, in 1980 and 1976, respectively.<sup>46</sup> Viñas spent the last years of exile in Spain, prior to his return to Argentina in 1984. When Altamirano and Sarlo travelled around Europe in 1981, they visited him and conducted an interview that was published in issue 13. In the interview, Viñas did not mention his condition of exile or the political situation in Argentina, but he was asked about the beginning of his career as an intellectual, his relation with Peronism and *radicalismo* – from the Radical Party, to which Viñas had belonged – and, more extensively, about *Contorno*. Viñas suggestively defined *Contorno*'s main motivation as an attempt to 'decipher Argentina', a trope – that of Argentina as an enigma – that has been a constant in the production of Argentine cultural elites: it was Sarmiento's main question in *Facundo*, Martínez Estrada's in *Radiografía de la Pampa*, and Piglia's in *Respiración artificial*.<sup>47</sup>

The intellectual exchange with David Viñas was not limited to the interview published in *Punto de Vista*. In 1981, Sarlo contributed to a special edition of *Les Temps*

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<sup>46</sup> Javier Rodríguez Marcos, 'David Viñas, escritor argentino', *El País*, 12 March 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Altamirano and Sarlo, 'Nosotros y ellos. David Viñas habla sobre *Contorno*', p. 12.

*Modernes*, edited for this occasion by Viñas himself and César Fernández Moreno at the request of the director of the French review, Claude Lanzmann.<sup>48</sup> The special issue was dedicated to Argentina and its political situation at that time (the masthead bore ‘Argentine, entre populisme et militarisme’). Sarlo’s article, signed under the pseudonym ‘Martin Eiser’ – as she was one of the few contributors still living in Argentina, and therefore, at risk – provided a very detailed description of censorship in Argentina under the dictatorship, which focused on the role played by big newspapers, such as *Clarín*, *La Nación* and *La Opinión*, and the media in general. Her text aimed at defining what she called the dictatorship’s ideology and the ways in which it was implemented, and at the same time she overtly condemned and denounced the totalitarianism of the Argentine military.<sup>49</sup> In a sense, she expressed here what she could not in *Punto de Vista* due to ongoing censorship. In spite of the use of a pseudonym, contributing to this edition of *Les Temps Modernes*, which contained articles by prestigious writers, such as Julio Cortázar, Juan Gelman, Noé Jitrik and León Rozitchner, entailed an important recognition for Sarlo as an intellectual figure, recognition that she increasingly cultivated since the 1980s.

Some exchanges established between *Punto de Vista* and other scholars outside Argentina are also worthy of mention here. In particular, issue 14 exhibits both the increasing political openness of this period and the connections established with exiles. As mentioned before, Portantiero wrote the main article for this instalment, but the issue also included a contribution by Enrique Tandeter, an Argentine historian who was living in the United Kingdom as a political exile. Tandeter wrote a brief introduction for an interview with the British historian Raphael Samuel, where he described the History Workshop movement, attached to Ruskin College, Oxford. This movement was founded on the initiative of Raphael Samuel in 1966. It aimed to prepare working people and union

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<sup>48</sup> Pablo Chacón, ‘La Argentina en *Les Temps Modernes*’, *Revista Ñ, Clarín*, 19 December 2011, <[https://www.clarin.com/rn/ideas/La\\_Argentina\\_en\\_Le\\_Temps\\_Modernes\\_0\\_BJqUvUKnPXe.html](https://www.clarin.com/rn/ideas/La_Argentina_en_Le_Temps_Modernes_0_BJqUvUKnPXe.html)> [accessed 22 May 2018].

<sup>49</sup> Martin Eiser [pseudonym of Beatriz Sarlo], ‘Miseria de la cultura argentina’, *Tiempos Modernos. Argentina, entre populismo y militarismo* (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Nacional, 2011), pp. 205-17. The original text was published under the title ‘Misère de la culture argentine’ in *Les Temps Modernes* no. 420-421 (July-August 1981).

members seeking to obtain a higher degree, and also looked to foster the study of working class lives.<sup>50</sup>

Additionally, the interview with Samuel was followed by a series of texts related to the political situation in Poland, at that time the scene of political turmoil against the Communist regime that was ruling the European country. Although the inclusion of these texts does not particularly reflect a communication established with exile, it does convey both the interest on political events outside Argentina and the new political positions adopted by the magazine. The first article was a review by Altamirano of a recently published book, *La oposición en el socialismo real* by Fernando Claudín, leader of the Spanish Communist Party at the time and one of the salient figures of Eurocommunism, a revisionist current within Marxism, flourishing in Spain, France, and Italy in the 1970s and 1980s. Altamirano endorsed Claudín's view that socialist regimes had reached a level of bureaucratic authoritarianism unacceptable for a democratic left, while it overtly defended the Polish people's right to oppose communist rule. Altamirano's essay was followed by the reproduction, in Spanish, of a leaflet distributed by the clandestine Polish publishing company Nowa, which denounced the censorship and strict control of cultural production exerted by the Polish State. The text claimed that, due to censorship prohibitions, many great Polish authors had not been published in the country.<sup>51</sup> A second text following the leaflet was an interview with a student who described his experience working for Nowa in the midst of the repressive context, which suggests that these texts were included not only to inform about the Polish situation, but also to reflect the Argentine crisis on the Polish mirror, as the testimony of the student resembled the experience of those living in Argentina:

El totalitarismo se extiende a la vida espiritual. De aquí nace la autocensura. Todos se habían acostumbrado a escribir autocensurándose. Cuando *Nowa* comenzó su actividad, se pensó en echar las bases del desarrollo futuro de la vida intelectual polaca. [...] Gombrowicz y otros grandes tienen sus

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<sup>50</sup> Punto de Vista, 'Las huellas de la historia. Reportaje a Raphael Samuel', *Punto de Vista*, no. 14 (March-July 1982), 12-13. It was not specified who conducted the interview, however, it was mentioned that two members of the magazine had conducted it in London some months before the publication of the issue.

<sup>51</sup> Punto de Vista, 'Nowa', *Punto de Vista*, no. 14 (March 1982), 18.

continuadores y ellos publican en *Nowa*, que es también un puente entre Polonia y la literatura mundial, censurada oficialmente.<sup>52</sup>

The description of the context in which *Nowa* published the works of Polish authors singularly invoked the historical circumstances in which *Punto de Vista* first appeared. Although Poland was under communist rule and Argentina was under a nationalistic right-wing military government, the authoritarianism that prevailed in both regimes resembled each other. Moreover, Altamirano's review of Claudín's book explicitly linked both contexts when describing the censorship and lack of freedom in the East:

Esa es la situación real, una situación en que consignas modestas como 'decir la verdad' se transforman en crítica de la sociedad. ¿Podríamos asombrarnos de ellos los argentinos después de la experiencia de estos años?<sup>53</sup>

Although Altamirano had condemned the Soviet bloc prior to 1976 (as the PCR to which he belonged was not aligned with other Communist Parties that supported Stalinism) in this article he went further and suggested reasons to support the restoration of democratic rights in Poland, in a statement that strongly endorsed democracy. In this piece, he also stressed that Human Rights, democracy and freedom of speech – which some years before had been considered 'bourgeois' liberties by the left, himself included – were basic Human Rights that all states had to grant to its citizens.<sup>54</sup>

The valorisation of democracy, although it was only referred to the socialist regimes of the East, anticipated a standpoint that the intellectuals of *Punto de Vista* would defend vehemently after 1983 and which involved the rethinking of Marxism, as Chapter 5 will explore. Democracy would not only become an object of study (as was anticipated in Portantiero's article), it would also become the keyword of the transition period in Argentina, the clearest claim under which a large part of Argentine society would gather, a common standpoint to launch its efforts against the military dictatorship. These claims, however, do not explain by themselves the fall of the military regime, as might be the case

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<sup>52</sup> *Punto de Vista*, 'La editorial clandestina o cómo escribir en polaco', *Punto de Vista*, no. 14 (March 1982), 19. Gombrowicz was an important influence for Argentine writers, especially for Piglia, who based one of the characters in *Respiración artificial*, Tardewski, on the figure of Gombrowicz.

<sup>53</sup> Carlos Altamirano, 'La oposición al socialismo real', *Punto de Vista*, no. 14 (March 1982), 14-17 (p.17).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

for other transitional processes in neighbouring countries.<sup>55</sup> As Guillermo O'Donnell has described, the Argentine transition to democracy was a 'democratisation by regime collapse', according to which the failures of the military are the main explanatory factor for the fall of the dictatorship towards 1982.<sup>56</sup> In hindsight, the key event that triggered the regime's downfall and the consequent restoration of democracy was the defeat of the Argentine army in the Falklands/Malvinas War in 1982.

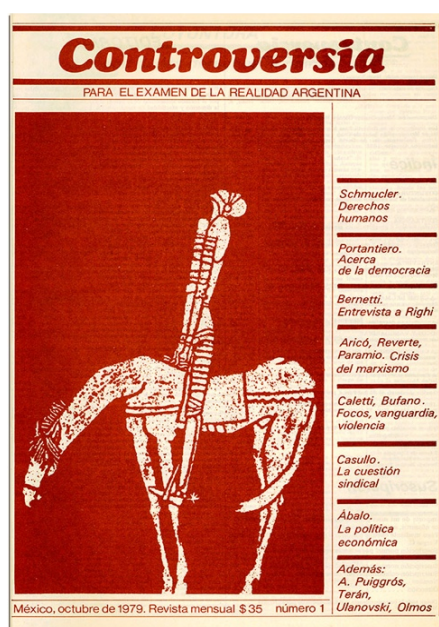


Figure 6. Cover of *Controversia* 1 (1979).



Figure 7. Cover of *Punto de Vista* 14 (1982).

## The Falklands/Malvinas War

The Falklands/Malvinas War is the only war Argentina has fought as a modern Republic. The conflict lasted a mere 74 days, but it remains as one of the main sovereignty issues in Argentina. For decades, children have learnt at school the 'himno a las Malvinas' and they are taught geography with maps in which the islands are depicted as being part of

<sup>55</sup> Stemming from Guillermo O'Donnell's theorisations, Scott Mainwaring suggests that the Argentine transition was a case of transition by collapse, which implied a clear defeat of the authoritarian regime and, consequently, a rapid rupture with the dictatorship, whereas transitions in Brazil (1985), Uruguay (1984), and Chile (1990) were transactional transitions, in which the military governments more or less negotiated the transition with political parties. Mainwaring, pp. 25-26.

<sup>56</sup> O'Donnell, 'Introduction to the Latin American cases', p. 8.

Argentina. Malvinas has been a national cause since 1833, when Great Britain took control of the South Atlantic Islands, but only after the 1982 war would the claim have international resonance and be treated as one of the main diplomatic issues in the Southern Cone country.

The Punto de Vista group had a strongly defined standpoint about the war. They followed Argentina's political events closely and interpreted the Falklands/Malvinas conflict as a military manoeuvre to preserve their power through the appeal to a nationalistic discourse. Their opposition to the war was conveyed in a text written by Altamirano and published in *Punto de Vista* a few months after the conflict ended. This was not a comfortable position to hold, as everyone who opposed the war was automatically accused by public opinion of being anti-patriotic, a political strategy that Raúl Alfonsín called 'cepo patriótico'.<sup>57</sup> In this context, there were two conflicting logics at work: while those who backed the offensive against the United Kingdom exalted patriotic values, which were usually associated with the popular – 'popular' in Argentina refers, to a great extent, to the working classes – a minority strongly opposed the war as they rejected the nationalism fostered by the military and considered it a spurious manoeuvre of the government to gain political legitimacy. Many leftist intellectuals adopted the former point of view, while only few of them adopted the latter.

What were the arguments on which these two logics were based? In order to understand the reasoning behind the support for Argentina's offensive, it is helpful to analyse a declaration published by the Grupo de Discusión Socialista, one of the associations of exiles in Mexico whose members also participated in CAS and, some of them, in *Controversia*. The Grupo de Discusión Socialista comprised Argentine exiles identified with socialism, such as José Aricó, Juan Carlos Portantiero, and Emilio de Ípola. The document they published, entitled 'Por la soberanía argentina en las Malvinas, por la soberanía popular en la Argentina', argued that although an illegitimate government was

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<sup>57</sup> Alfonsín held in the newspaper *Clarín* that the military adventure over the Falklands/Malvinas was an attempt to block the democratic transition. See Beatriz Sarlo, 'El patriotismo despótico', *La Nación*, 27 January 2012. <<http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1443722-el-patriotismo-despotico>> [accessed 23 October 2017].

leading Argentina into war, the demand for sovereignty was entirely legitimate.<sup>58</sup> Britain's rule over the islands was understood as a residue of colonialism, and, therefore, it was argued that the left had to oppose it regardless of other distinctions. The document's closing sentences called for a ceasefire, but also for the restoration of Argentina's sovereignty over the islands. In spite of the fact that the Argentine military had killed and disappeared tens of thousands and forced many more into exile, the declaration stated that Argentina's claim was part of popular struggle ('lucha popular') and so the origin of the conflict had to be differentiated from its legitimacy. This document disregarded the reasons why the military had gone to war; instead, it expressed an anti-imperialist stance.

In contrast, another statement published in the newspaper *Nueva Presencia* and signed by a small group of intellectuals living in Argentina – including Beatriz Sarlo, Carlos Altamirano and María Teresa Gramuglio – harshly condemned the military action over the islands and accused the authoritarian government of making use of the sovereignty problem in a 'manipulative' way in order to preserve its power.<sup>59</sup> In their declaration, these intellectuals also accused unions and political parties of justifying the government's logic by not paying any attention to the 'the who, why and when' of the war. Moreover, the document condemned the military's offensive against Britain as a means to consolidate a more positive image domestically, while it also addressed the fact that the government was trying to obscure Argentina's acute economic problems by starting a war. Finally, the text's closing argument affirmed: 'La suerte de la verdadera soberanía nacional y el correlativo derecho del pueblo argentino a autodeterminarse se decide frente al régimen militar que lo ha oprimido durante estos seis años.'<sup>60</sup> According to this viewpoint, the terms of the discussion were inverted: the people's enemy was not the United Kingdom, but rather, Argentina's military government, and the main sovereignty claim was related to the political situation within Argentina and not outside.

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<sup>58</sup> The document signed by most members of the Grupo de Discusión Socialista is reproduced in León Rozitchner, *Malvinas: de la guerra sucia a la guerra limpia. El punto ciego de la crítica política* (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Nacional, 2015), pp. 143-55.

<sup>59</sup> The document, entitled 'Paz inmediata y negociación. Única victoria del pueblo', was published in *Nueva Presencia* on 25 May 1982 and is reproduced in Beatriz Sarlo, *Viajes* (Buenos Aires: Seix Barral, 2014), pp. 251-60.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.



For the members of *Punto de Vista*, who had already established connections with Argentines living in Mexico, both on a personal and intellectual level, the disagreement deserved attention. On 2 June 1982, two months after the war began, and a few weeks before it ended, Sarlo sent a letter to Aricó pointing out her disagreement with the document the Argentines had sent from Mexico:

Según leo en las primeras líneas del documento, debemos esforzarnos en no confundir las cosas. Se trata en este caso de atacar los últimos baluartes de la metafísica social: nada menos que pulverizar para siempre el ya bastante desprestigiado recurso de interrogarse sobre los orígenes. Ustedes piensan que es un obstáculo (epistemológico) para entender el actual conflicto referirse ‘exclusivamente a sus orígenes’. Yo diría que igualmente peligroso es guiarse *exclusivamente por los deseos*.<sup>61</sup>

What Sarlo pointed out was that the Falklands/Malvinas adventure could not be separated from its origins in the military’s pursuit of legitimization. Aricó replied to Sarlo’s letter with gratitude and addressed her as the representative of the entire magazine (‘me referiré a tu carta del 2 de junio [...] que supongo reflejan de algún modo la opinión de Carlos y los demás.’)<sup>62</sup> Eventually, those in the Grupo de Discusión Socialista who signed the document, would come to regret it, as Emilio de Ípola pointed out in an interview years later:

Nosotros, desde México, habíamos sacado una declaración imperdonable. [...] Todavía no logro explicarme cómo [la] pudimos escribir. Si me preguntan ahora de Malvinas, yo me niego a hablar, porque ya lo hice y mal, así que prefiero que hablen otros.<sup>63</sup>

*Punto de Vista*’s standpoint on the war was finally made explicit in issue 15 (August-October 1982), in Carlos Altamirano’s article ‘Lecciones de una guerra’. The text introduced a political analysis of the Argentine situation, which reaffirmed the interest of the editors in the Argentine political context. In the future, the magazine would continue to publish articles on Argentine politics whenever there was a transcendental event. The article also strongly disapproved of the conflict by denouncing, once again, the

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<sup>61</sup> This letter has also been reproduced in Sarlo, *Viajes*, pp. 246-51. (Italics in the original).

<sup>62</sup> Letter from José Aricó to Beatriz Sarlo (2 June 1982). Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Biblioteca María Aricó, Archivo José María Aricó, Documentos, Caja 9, Folio 2.4.

<sup>63</sup> Javier Trímboli, ‘Emilio de Ípola’ [Interview], in *La izquierda en la Argentina*, ed. by Trímboli, pp. 147-79 (p. 153).

opportunism of the military. Moreover, Altamirano's article seemed to address those leftist intellectuals who had supported the conflict against the United Kingdom, pointing out how mistaken they had been by stating that 'los que se propusieron reapropiarse del conflicto para darle una orientación radical, asimilándolo a una Guerra de liberación nacional, únicamente lograron encrespar sus propias declaraciones.'<sup>64</sup>

In short, what *Punto de Vista* condemned was the nationalism that prevailed over the struggle against the authoritarian regime that was ruling the country. The final sentence in Altamirano's article stressed the recurrent topic of nation and democracy:

Pero no hay otro camino tampoco para la 'cuestión nacional': la historia de nuestro país la ha anudado inextricablemente con la 'cuestión democrática' y ninguna puede resolverse verdaderamente sin la otra.<sup>65</sup>

Repeatedly, democracy was set in relation with the 'national question', a tension that had remained unsolved insofar as coups, military tutelage and political proscriptions (prominently of Peronism between 1955 and 1973) marked Argentina's twentieth century. It is not extraordinary that this century in Argentina, characterised by internal conflicts and violence, ended with a violent conflict: a war whose outcome was the killing of over 600, mostly young, Argentine soldiers. After the defeat of the Argentine army, the military saw themselves in a debilitated position and with little power to negotiate the transition, and they finally called for presidential elections in 1983.

With the defeat of Malvinas/Falklands and the 1983 elections, *Punto de Vista* published another editorial that welcomed the democratisation process that was opening. The text revolved around the matter of democracy, anticipating a discussion, namely the definition of the new democracy to build in Argentina, that would be at the centre of the intellectual concerns of the group. Democracy did not only mean the restoration of the rule of law, and the normal functioning of Parliament, democracy also entailed a solution for social inequalities, as the editorial in *Punto de Vista* 17 conveyed:

Una sociedad se democratiza no sólo en las modalidades del ejercicio político, sino en la producción de nuevas condiciones económicas, sociales y culturales, que conviertan a ese ejercicio en una posibilidad efectiva. En nuestra perspectiva, democracia supone una transformación profunda de las

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<sup>64</sup> Carlos Altamirano, 'Lecciones de una guerra', *Punto de Vista*, no. 15 (August 1982), 3-5 (p. 4).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

situaciones de desigualdad y por lo tanto una vía de reparación de la injusticia en todos los niveles.<sup>66</sup>

In the years to come, democracy would prove its viability as successive constitutional governments did not suffer the kind of authoritarian interruptions that typically characterised twentieth century Argentina. However, this editorial comment can retrospectively be interpreted as a naïve statement: democratisation did not reach every sphere of public life in Argentina, and even less would the return to regular democratic elections solve the problems of social inequality. Although the editorial clarified that this conception of democracy was only an abstract goal, it expressed the new cultural and political perspectives brought about by the initiation of the democratic transition, in which democracy was regarded as an all-encompassing solution for conflicts in Argentina. This aspect of the development of *Punto de Vista* will be addressed at length throughout the following chapters.

#### Ustedes, los de *Punto de Vista*

If, at first, *Punto de Vista* was generally considered a very audacious publication by its readership, and intellectuals from different political affiliations admired the resolution of its editors, towards the end of the dictatorship the approving consensus on the magazine would start to fragment. As *Punto de Vista* defined a more straightforward political stance, disagreements with other intellectual groups started to appear, while the different members of the magazine were perceived as voicing a unified political stance.

Now the days of the common enemy represented by the military were ending and the country was getting ready to celebrate, after ten years, new presidential elections, which renewed discrepancies amongst the left. The *Punto de Vista* group endorsed the candidate from the Radical Party, traditionally associated with moderate and republican positions and as the party of the middle class opposed to Peronism. However, Raúl Alfonsín, the presidential candidate for the Radical Party, managed to gather the support not only of the non-Peronist electorate, but also of some Peronist sectors.<sup>67</sup> As the next

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<sup>66</sup> *Punto de Vista*, 'Editorial', *Punto de Vista*, no. 17 (April-July 1983), 3.

<sup>67</sup> Halperín Donghi, *La larga agonía de la Argentina peronista*, p. 116.

chapter will examine, Alfonsín's campaign based on defence of Human Rights and democracy, ideas of modernisation, the condemnation of the crimes committed by the military and the promises to bring justice to the victims of repression sat well in the electorate, which finally got him to win the elections. The editorial article in *Punto de Vista* 19 (December 1983), dedicated to the analysis of the presidential elections celebrated in October that year, clearly endorsed Alfonsín against Ítalo Luder, his main contender from the Peronist Party. Alfonsín's pro-democratic and anti-authoritarian discourse was praised by *Punto de Vista* in this editorial:

El discurso de Alfonsín descubrió y articuló exitosamente una temática antiautoritaria y democrática con los lemas de una sociedad menos desigual que atendiera a las urgencias de la miseria, el desempleo y la devastación económica.<sup>68</sup>

To a certain extent, Alfonsín's discourse included many topics that the *Punto de Vista* group was considering with increasing interest, such as democracy, anti-authoritarianism, and the problem of social inequalities in Argentina. At the same time, the editorial in issue 19 vehemently criticised the position adopted by the left, by arguing that 'la franja de las izquierdas partidarias [...] fue tozudamente ciega a los contenidos y formas que estaban en debate.'<sup>69</sup> As Piglia had written in his letter to Sazbón at the beginning of the dictatorship, the central matter was to confront the military regime, but now differences started to appear within the left.

The endorsement of democracy exhibited in the editorial was paired with a critique of traditional Marxism set forth during the transition. Both stances would begin to elicit questionings from other intellectuals for whom the abandonment of earlier readings of Marxism was a sign of claudication. The discussion held between Oscar Terán and José Sazbón in the pages of *Punto de Vista* during this period is a good example of the oppositions that emerged in the intellectual field as the channels of expressions opened. As stated above, Terán wrote for issue 17 a short review on the book *El discurso jurídico*, in which he denounced the orthodoxy of some of his Marxist colleagues in asking rhetorically: '¿no habrá llegado también para el pensamiento argentino de izquierda la

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<sup>68</sup> *Punto de Vista*, 'Editorial', *Punto de Vista*, no. 19 (December 1983), 2-3 (p. 2).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

oportunidad de reclamar el derecho al postmarxismo?’<sup>70</sup> Two issues later, the editors published a response to Terán’s text by José Sazbón sent from Venezuela, under a new section entitled ‘Derecho a réplica’. Sazbón criticised Terán’s article, arguing that he had not explained sufficiently why the left in Argentina had to embrace Post Marxism. Sazbón mistrusted the idea of abandoning the traditional Marxist corpus of ideas that had largely inspired intellectuals in Argentina prior to 1976, and accused *Punto de Vista* of promoting the death of Marxism:

Mientras estos funerales ocurren en las páginas de *Punto de Vista*, fuera de ellas y de sus fronteras el difunto ‘reclama su derecho’ con una energía que debería hacer meditar sobre ‘la oportunidad’ de su lápida. En las últimas dos décadas, el vigor expansivo y la escala de aplicación de la teoría marxista crecieron considerablemente en diversos escenarios.<sup>71</sup>

Sazbón’s view could not but clash with the stances of *Punto de Vista* and *Controversia*. For these magazines, the crisis of Marxism was a fact, and intellectuals had to face it without attachments to traditional interpretations or dogmatisms. Terán later claimed in response to Sazbón: ‘a quienes se aferran con honestidad a la letra y al espíritu del marxismo he querido transmitirles la sospecha de que su doctrina no es la sal de la tierra ni los revolucionarios son un criterio de verdad’, accusing Sazbón of being a dogmatic Marxist.<sup>72</sup> This discussion regarding the revolutionary past of intellectuals became a watershed for the Argentine intelligentsia, and while the *Punto de Vista* group embraced more moderate political views, those still affiliated with traditional Marxism accused them of following the trends. This separation became an important source of conflict and distrust, as expressed in another letter Piglia wrote to Sazbón after this controversy in the pages of *Punto de Vista*:

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<sup>70</sup> Oscar Terán, ‘¿Adiós a la última instancia?’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 17 (April-July 1983), 46-47 (p. 47).

<sup>71</sup> José Sazbón, ‘Derecho a réplica: una invitación al postmarxismo’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 19 (December 1983), 36-38 (p. 38).

<sup>72</sup> Oscar Terán, ‘Una polémica postergada: la crisis del marxismo’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 20 (May 1984), 19-21 (p. 21).

Leyeron muy bien tu respuesta a Terán, bien en la línea en que la leí yo cuando la escribiste. Muchos de nuestros amigos intelectuales se han convertido en funcionarios del sentido común y por supuesto desde ahí no se puede pensar.<sup>73</sup>

*Punto de Vista* was expressing more openly its political stances, which, to some extent, contradicted those of the early 1970s. Therefore, they started to be seen as a compact group with a defined political position not shared by other colleagues.

Controversies, though, were not only political; they were also literary or political-literary, as in the case of the debate between Carlos Altamirano and the Argentine philosopher José Pablo Feinmann. In issue 17, Altamirano reviewed Feinmann's book *Filosofía y nación*, citing it as a typical example of historical revisionism, a historiographical current that was popular amongst the few Peronist intellectuals. In Altamirano's view, the book provided an excessively simplified account of the Argentine intellectual past. Feinmann's answer, also published under the section 'Derecho a réplica', tells much about the constitution of *Punto de Vista* as a coherent and compact group:

Querido Altamirano: no lo digo por pedantería sino porque es cierto: no acostumbro a responder críticas, sean 'a favor', 'en contra' o algo entre ambas puntas. Pero Uds. – y digo, claro, 'ustedes', porque los visualizo así, digamos: la gente de 'Punto de Vista' – es diferente: leo la revista, los respeto y me interesan [...]. Me cuesta aceptar o entender, Altamirano, que yo, por ejemplo, haya leído con total acuerdo una nota tuya (editorial de la revista, creo) sobre las Malvinas y vos te muestres tan apartado de mi libro. O alguno de los dos no entendió algo o nos estamos polarizando – y claro está: debilitando – absurdamente.<sup>74</sup>

As Feinmann pointed out, there was an ongoing polarization within the intellectual left, as the controversies with Piglia, Sazbón and Feinmann illustrated. These exchanges under the 'Derecho a réplica' section are, however, rather unique in the magazine's history, as *Punto de Vista* would thereafter adopt a strategy according to which controversies with other intellectuals were not published in the magazine.<sup>75</sup> Other intellectual groups and

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<sup>73</sup> Letter from Ricardo Piglia to José Sazbón (24 May 1985). Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas, Archive José Sazbón, FA44.

<sup>74</sup> José Pablo Feinmann, 'Derecho a réplica', *Punto de Vista*, no. 18 (August 1983), 59.

<sup>75</sup> Plotkin and González Leandri pointed out that, by adopting the strategy of no-confrontation, *Punto de Vista* delimited insiders and outsiders. For this characterisation of *Punto de Vista*, they use Norbert Elías' description of this sort of communal behaviour, according to which the group defined as insiders have great internal cohesion and a series of categories with which to marginalise outsiders. Plotkin and González Leandri, p. 237.

magazines, nonetheless, would try to defy *Punto de Vista*'s stances, mainly in the case of *Unidos* magazine (1983-1991). *Unidos*, which will be analysed in the next chapter, was a magazine identified with Peronism, whereas *Punto de Vista* was considered, throughout its history, a publication opposite to the different forms that Peronism adopted in the late twentieth century Argentina.

The controversies held in the pages of the magazine in the late years of the dictatorship point at two changes within the intellectual field in this period. First, although these disputes suggest a fragmentation within the group of intellectuals who resisted the dictatorship, they also exhibit that the intellectual field was recomposing. Bourdieu's image of the field of forces as constituted by elements that are in constant interaction, of opposition or affinity, might help us to understand this transformation: While in the early years of dictatorship a great number of Argentine intellectuals constituted a cohesive group with little participation in public debates and little visibility given their semi-clandestine opposition to the dictatorship, in the late years of the dictatorship these agents began to recuperate their mobility, abandoning the numbness of earlier years and, consequently, they restored disputes, alliances and interactions. If during the beginning of the dictatorship there was a certain stillness in this field, as the transition approached, the elements began to move more quickly and expand. Second, what the disputes ultimately suggest is that *Punto de Vista* was now a magazine that other intellectuals or group of intellectuals recognised as a publication of reference, and its members were considered a compact group. To the above-mentioned signs of increasing recognition (the interview with Jean Franco, and Sarlo's contribution to the special edition of *Les Temps Modernes*) can be added the inclusion of some members of the group in the list of new Argentine literary critics. In 1981, the CEAL was publishing the collection *Capítulo* on the history of Argentine literature. In the instalment dedicated to contemporary literary criticism, many members of *Punto de Vista*, those specialised in the study of literature, were considered a new generation of critics in Argentina. While Sarlo and Altamirano were described as the scholars who had introduced the sociological method in the study of Argentine literature, Gramuglio was recognised for her solid work on Borges and *Sur*.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Nicolás Rosa, 'La crítica literaria contemporánea', in *Capítulo. Historia de la literatura argentina*, ed. by Susana Zanetti (Buenos Aires, CEAL, 1981) pp. 401-03.

Other critics who had either belonged to *Punto de Vista* or were close to it were also included in the list of new contemporary critics, such as Josefina Ludmer, Ricardo Piglia and Nicolás Rosa.<sup>77</sup>

Also, in 1983, Sarlo and Altamirano co-authored one of their first published books, *Literatura y Sociedad*, in which they articulated many of the problems they had surveyed during the dictatorship years, especially regarding their sociology of literature. The book, which has been hitherto re-edited a number of times, was dedicated to the members of *Punto de Vista* as the dedication read ‘a nuestros compañeros de *Punto de Vista*.’<sup>78</sup> The dedication showed the extent to which the magazine had become a mark of identity for those who edited it. Not only had the magazine provided refuge for them in the years of repression, it had also been a project that proved successful, and would be even more in the years to come.



Figure 8. Members and friends of *Punto de Vista* in the early 1980s. From left to right: Ricardo Piglia, Juan José Saer, Carlos Dámaso Martínez, Hugo Vezzetti, Carlos Altamirano, María Teresa Gramuglio, and Beatriz Sarlo.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, *Literatura/Sociedad* (Buenos Aires: Hachette, 1983).



## Conclusion

The late dictatorship years brought about a slight opening of the channels of expression, and *Punto de Vista*, in this context, found itself in a privileged situation. It had been published for a couple of years, with quality articles and reviews, and its readership was growing. The *Punto de Vista* group had effectively maintained a space for intellectual comradeship and debate in the darkest years of Argentina's recent history and they were beginning to be recognised for this initiative. Intellectuals from abroad admired the resolution with which the editors took on the task of publishing a magazine in Buenos Aires, where risks were considerable. They were becoming, increasingly, legitimised agents of the precarious Argentine intellectual field, which was reflected on the contacts and exchanges they established with the Controversia group, David Viñas, and other intellectuals living in exile. It is interesting to notice one of the entries of Piglia's diaries from 1980 in which he refers to the magazine as a moral option:

Si pienso en las etapas anteriores de mi vida, puedo ver un período «social» que va de 1963 a 1975, en el que circulaba en lugares diversos con responsabilidades múltiples [...], luego vino una etapa de encierro ligada a la situación política y, por fin, en los últimos tiempos, otra vez a las exigencias morales (*Punto de Vista*, las reuniones y las discusiones en las catacumbas). En un sentido, la novela que he escrito sintetiza todos esos momentos.<sup>79</sup>

*Punto de Vista* was, in this quotation, 'una exigencia moral', a moral requirement, perhaps because the only way of opposing the dictatorship was to keep a reduced level of intellectual commitment, if not with ideas of social change, at least with the possibility of discussing ideas. In the years to come, *Punto de Vista* would go through more significant changes in its topics, format and staff. However, the magazine maintained the main motivations that delineated the project in its beginnings: the interest in cultural expressions, in new criticism and, more importantly, I would argue, the driving force behind its publication: the idea that intellectuals are in a position to contribute (as a moral option) to society. The following chapter will provide an account of the transition to democracy in Argentina and its consequences in the cultural and intellectual fields. Later

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<sup>79</sup> Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, III, pp. 119-20. Piglia refers in this quotation to his novel *Respiración artificial*.

on, in Chapter 5, I will analyse the re-structuring of the magazine after the transition, since the new context imposed to editors the re-thinking of *Punto de Vista*.

## PART TWO

### Chapter 4: Transitions

El alfonsinismo era el paraíso de los intelectuales.<sup>1</sup>

Intellectuals frequently appeared in the media. Alfonsín himself turned to them, as advisers or technocratic functionaries, and his discourse, which expressed in political terms the ideas that academics were elaborating, revealed itself to be modern, complex, and profound, in tune with what was expected of a world statesman.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter examines, firstly, the history of the transition to democracy in Argentina beginning in 1983, and, secondly, the cultural production of the transition. These two issues are examined in order to understand the specific debates set forth by *Punto de Vista* in its third period, from 1983 to 1987, to be analysed in Chapter 5. These articles focused on Human Rights, culture, the recent history of Argentina and the re-thinking of the left, and are directly related to the specific way in which the country transitioned from an authoritarian rule to a democracy.

As most historians argue, the year 1983 marks a watershed in the country's political history insofar as the elections celebrated that year put a final end to the cycles of democratic instability in Argentina throughout the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the years that followed the fall of the military regime gave birth to what Novaro and Palermo call the 'consensus of 1983', referring to the widespread notion that the establishment of democracy would lead to a re-foundation of the social contract, a new economic model,

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<sup>1</sup> Hora and Trímboli, 'Beatriz Sarlo' [Interview], p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> Romero, *A History of Argentina*, p. 258.

<sup>3</sup> Most Argentine historians agree on the characterisation of the year 1983 as a turning point in Argentine history, as Alfonsín's victory represented a definitive break with the dictatorship years. However, they have also highlighted the difficulties in assessing the extent to which the goals set by Alfonsín were effectively fulfilled in the years that followed the transition. For an overview of these discussions and an assessment of the twenty years of democracy since 1983 in Argentina see Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo, 'Introducción. Las ideas de la época entre la invención de una tradición y el eterno retorno de la crisis', in *La historia reciente*, ed. by Novaro and Palermo, pp.11-33; and Alfredo Pucciarelli, 'Introducción', in *Los años de Alfonsín, ¿El poder de la democracia o la democracia del poder?*, ed. by Alfredo Pucciarelli (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2006), pp. 7-22.

new institutions based on ethical principles, and, in short, to a resolution of long-term and recurrent problems of economic and political instability and authoritarianism.<sup>4</sup> One of the main issues that the new government had to solve in order to build a strong foundation for democracy was the prosecution of the members of the military in charge of implementing the system of state terrorism between 1976-1983. The members of the military juntas were finally tried in 1985, representing one of the most important events of the transition. Intellectuals were central actors in this transition, as they actively engaged in public debates and created spaces of communication, from magazines to centres of study, in which they put forward ideas and theories that accompanied, highlighted, and enhanced the official democratic discourse.<sup>5</sup>

With regard to the cultural production of the transition, the democratic opening was accompanied by the multiplication of films, novels, magazines and new cultural experiences that created a flourishing cultural scene in stark contrast with the years of dictatorship. In the terms of Bourdieu, the intellectual field went through a significant restructuring as new agents contributed to the cultural field and their artistic production thrived in the new context. As in the political realm, many of these cultural productions tried to provide an answer to the question of how to deal with the past. At the same time, on a forward-looking level, artists, writers and intellectuals took on the task of creating and defining a new place for culture within the newly restored democracy.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, the Punto de Vista group played a key role in this reconstruction of culture, not only because they published a magazine that was central to the intellectual field of the period, but also because they actively engaged with the discussions of the times, through institutions they founded, through their new jobs at the university and, in some cases, as the ‘Prince advisors’. While the next chapter will analyse in detail the discussions

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<sup>4</sup> Novaro and Palermo, ‘Introducción’, pp. 12-13.

<sup>5</sup> Apart from Roxana Patiño’s analysis of the intellectual field of the transition through the study of magazines, an overview of the development of the intellectual field in this period is Juan Carlos Torre, ‘Los intelectuales y la experiencia democrática’, in *La historia reciente*, ed. by Novaro and Palermo, pp. 193-97. Also, a study of the emergence of centres of study and the development of social sciences in Argentina during the transition is Cecilia Lesgart, *Usos de la transición a la democracia: Ensayo, Ciencia y Política en la década del 80* (Buenos Aires: Homo Sapiens, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> For an overview of the cultural rebirth in Argentina during the transition see Sylvia Saítta, ‘La narrativa argentina, entre innovación y mercado (1983-2003)’ in *La historia reciente*, ed. by Novaro and Palermo, pp. 239-56.

happening in the pages of the magazine during this period, this preliminary chapter examines the rich and flourishing cultural and intellectual debates of the transition necessary to understand the more specific debates set forth by *Punto de Vista*.

### The transition to democracy

On October 30, 1983, Argentina celebrated democratic elections after seven years of military dictatorship. It was an unusual event for a society used to living under authoritarian rule. Many people in their twenties and thirties had never voted before, while their parents and grandparents had lived most of their lives under military tutelage. Over the course of the previous twenty-eight years, only the 1973 election had followed free and fair procedures, and soon after Perón's victory in this election, the first signs of what would become the state terrorism of the late 1970s appeared. Therefore, although Argentines embraced the democratic opening, it was still uncertain whether the consolidation of a democratic culture in the country was possible or not.

It was difficult to foresee, in 1983, that democratic rule would endure for many decades. On the one hand, as historian Luis Alberto Romero pointed out, democracy was in many ways a panacea, insofar as it was seen as the central solution for the urgent economic, political and social problems that the dictatorship was leaving behind.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the many decades without real democratic practice necessitated, in Romero's words, 'a new apprenticeship in the rules of the game and in democracy's values and general principles', a goal which presented the biggest challenge.<sup>8</sup> Even if the ritual of celebrating democratic elections has hitherto survived in Argentina, it is more debatable whether Argentines have learnt to fully incorporate other key aspects of democracy. In Novaro and Palermo's retrospective view of the twenty years that followed the transition, there has been a 'patter of frustration' in regards to the goals that democracy could not fulfil adequately, leading to a sense of crisis and the discrediting of democratic institutions.<sup>9</sup> Pucciarelli goes further by suggesting that democracy has suffered a process

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<sup>7</sup> Romero, *A History of Argentina*, p. 251.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Novaro and Palermo, 'Introducción', pp. 11-12.

of degradation which has led to the perpetuation of undemocratic practices.<sup>10</sup> In any case, the period beginning in 1983, often called the ‘democratic spring’, deserves attention in order to understand the foundations of contemporary democracy in Argentina and the active engagement of intellectuals during the enthusiastic years of the transition.

In the political realm, the presidential race of 1983 narrowed down to two candidates with similar chances of winning the elections: Ítalo Luder and Raúl Alfonsín. Luder, the Peronist Party’s candidate, was a distinguished constitutional lawyer who had been Juan Perón’s personal lawyer and had served in Isabel Perón’s administration, between July 1974 and March 1976. He was supposed to represent a balance between new and old tendencies within Peronism and therefore his campaign strongly appealed to a Peronist identity.<sup>11</sup> One of his slogans, ‘Por un Peronismo unido y revolucionario que termine para siempre con la raza maldita de oligarcas’, invoked the return of a united Peronism, in a rhetoric that was closer to a pre-dictatorship discourse than to a renewed political stance.<sup>12</sup> As a Peronist candidate had never lost a democratic election, Luder largely invoked the Peronist identity during his campaign, as he took for granted that the elected President was going to be a Peronist.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, Luder counted on the support of unions, historically aligned with Peronism, as well as of the military, as Luder showed acceptance towards the self-amnesty law passed by the military while Alfonsín had condemned it.<sup>14</sup> This controversial law, signed by the last military President five weeks before the elections, granted amnesty for all subversive and contrasubversive acts that had taken place between 1973 and 1982, including military crimes. This self-amnesty law was a singular example of the impunity the military tried to obtain, but, paradoxically, the text of this law was also an acknowledgment of the offenses and crimes the dictatorship had perpetuated as it precluded penal actions against the crimes committed in response to what

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<sup>10</sup> Pucciarelli, ‘Introducción’, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Romero, *A History of Argentina*, p. 252.

<sup>12</sup> Campaign flyer for Luder-Bittel, Archive Montoneros, Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas, [SJC C3/17-5].

<sup>13</sup> An analysis of the Presidential campaign of 1983 and the candidate’s discourses is Gabriel Vommaro, ‘Cuando el pasado es superado por el presente: las elecciones presidenciales y la construcción de un nuevo tiempo político en la Argentina’, in *Los años de Alfonsín*, ed. by Pucciarelli, pp. 245-88.

<sup>14</sup> Acuña and Smulovitz, pp. 47-48.

the military called ‘terrorism or subversive activities’.<sup>15</sup>

Alfonsín, the candidate of the Radical Party followed a very different strategy from Luder’s. He was a middle-aged lawyer who was leading a renovation within the Radical Party, representing a progressive sector that had strongly opposed the military dictatorship and the Falklands/Malvinas War. Moreover, Alfonsín was member of the Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos, founded in 1975, through which he had assumed the legal defence of political prisoners during the dictatorship.<sup>16</sup> He was therefore strongly committed to Human Rights movements and he energetically opposed the military and their self-amnesty law during the last days of his campaign.<sup>17</sup> His speeches focused on promises of state modernisation, national unity and reinforcing of rule of law, which were particularly timely in Argentina, and which gave birth to, as some analysts argue, a new and democratic political tradition in Argentina.<sup>18</sup>

On October 26, 1983, around one million people gathered for Alfonsín’s campaign finale to hear him speak about the ethical and moral challenges of the immediate future, Human Rights, and the modernisation of the country’s institutions. As became customary during his campaign, Alfonsín recited the Argentine constitution at the end of his speech, praising the values of national unity, justice, peace, general wellbeing, and freedom written in the Republic’s fundamental text.<sup>19</sup> The Peronist rally which closed Luder’s campaign contrasted enormously with Alfonsín’s since Herminio Iglesias, the Peronist

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<sup>15</sup> The text of law stated: ‘Decláranse extinguidas las acciones penales emergentes de los delitos cometidos con motivación o finalidad terrorista o subversiva, desde el 25 de mayo de 1973 hasta el 17 de junio de 1982. Los beneficios otorgados por esta ley se extienden, asimismo, a todos los hechos de naturaleza penal realizados en ocasión o con motivo del desarrollo de acciones dirigidas a prevenir, conjurar o poner fin a las referidas actividades terroristas o subversivas, cualquiera hubiere sido su naturaleza o el bien jurídico lesionado. Los efectos de esta ley alcanzan a los autores, partícipes, instigadores, cómplices o encubridores y comprende a los delitos comunes conexos y a los delitos militares conexos.’ Law 22.924, ‘Ley de Pacificación Nacional’, 24 September 1983 <<http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/70000-74999/73271/norma.htm>> [accessed 7 May 2018].

<sup>16</sup> Nino, p. 59.

<sup>17</sup> During the campaign, Alfonsín promised to nullify the self amnesty law, had he been elected, opposing an internal line within his party keener on establishing an agreement with the military. See Nino, pp. 62-62 and Acuña and Smulovitz, pp. 49-50.

<sup>18</sup> Vommaro, p. 283.

<sup>19</sup> Halperín Donghi has argued that the ‘lay prayer’ enunciated by Alfonsín in his campaign was successful because it gave response to two main expectations Argentines had after the dictatorship: the restoration of liberties, and also the restoration of an orderly and normal functioning of institutions. Halperín Donghi, *La larga agonía de la Argentina peronista*, p. 117.

candidate for governor of the Province of Buenos Aires, set on fire a coffin wrapped in the Radical Party's flag. Such an act of violence elicited the condemnation of many Argentines, who, a few days later, cast their votes in favour of the Radical candidate. This led to the Peronists and Luder – the polling favourite – losing to Alfonsín, who won with 52 percent of the vote.<sup>20</sup>

This election installed Alfonsín in office between 1983 and 1989. During his six-year presidency, he achieved a number of key successes, but also suffered many setbacks, especially during the last two years of his government. He inherited a weak economy, with high inflation rates and a mounting external debt, an impoverished society in which social differences were more acute than ever, and he faced the tough opposition from the unions – aligned, for the most part, with right-wing Peronism – which organised a considerable number of strikes against the government.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the new government had to deal with the opposition of the military, unleashed by the trials against the military juntas that began in 1985. The Catholic Church also opposed Alfonsín as he exhibited a secular stance, promoted the divorce law, and opened the door to a cultural liberalisation.<sup>22</sup> However, during the first two years of his presidency, Alfonsín carried sufficient legitimacy to implement some measures that had abiding consequences in Argentina's civil life.

The measures implemented by the Radical government at the dawn of the democratic transition mostly focused on goals of modernisation and democratisation. In education, the government established a program of mass literacy and eliminated authoritarian practices in schools, such as the prohibition of student unions. It also opened channels to start debating and reformulating the entire educational system, an initiative that culminated in the Pedagogical Congress of 1988, which aimed to establish the basis of a new Federal Education law.<sup>23</sup> In relation to the media, the government sought to erase all practices of censorship that had been customary under the military regime, promoting

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<sup>20</sup> Nino, p. 66.

<sup>21</sup> For an analysis of the opposition of unions to Alfonsín's government see Eugenia Arruguete, 'Lucha política y conflicto de clases en la posdictadura', in *Los años de Alfonsín*, ed. by Pucciarelli, pp. 413-60.

<sup>22</sup> Romero, *A History of Argentina*, p. 256.

<sup>23</sup> See Guillermina Tiramonti, 'Veinte años de democracia: acepciones y perspectivas para la democratización del sistema educativo', in *La historia reciente*, ed. by Novaro and Palermo, pp. 223-38.



a pluralism of opinion and the development of the cultural industry.<sup>24</sup>

Universities also suffered many changes, as the government passed a law to restore their autonomy and create the conditions for their independent functioning. Universities in Argentina had gained autonomy since 1918, thanks to the university reform movement, originating in the city of Córdoba, which soon spread all across Latin American universities. The autonomy principle establishes that universities should be independent from governments, by electing their own authorities and formulating their own syllabi; however, this principle of self-rule had been traditionally interrupted during military governments in Argentina. Hence, the 1983 university normalisation entailed the restoring of autonomy across all higher education institutions, but especially at UBA. Francisco Delich, a prominent sociologist who directed the journal *Crítica y Utopía* – frequently advertised in the pages of *Punto de Vista* – was appointed as interim administrator by the Minister of Education to direct the normalisation of the UBA.<sup>25</sup> Delich implemented a series of reforms, which included the creation of post-graduate courses, new departments, and a new admission system. He also laid the foundations to attract to the university many prestigious intellectuals and scholars who had been living in exile and were returning to Argentina. Other intellectuals who had stayed in Buenos Aires, suffering political persecution, such as those gathered around *Punto de Vista*, also obtained posts at the UBA during this period, as I will explain in more detail later in this chapter.

The Radical government also passed an important law in 1987, which authorised legal divorce, and a subsequent law that established joint shared custody of children, giving women equal rights to men with regard to their offspring.<sup>26</sup> These measures conveyed the liberal and modernising stance of Alfonsín's administration, widely accepted and welcomed by public opinion. Another important success achieved by the

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<sup>24</sup> Romero, *A History of Argentina*, p. 258.

<sup>25</sup> Delich has reconstructed his work as temporary head of UBA in Delich, *808 días en la Universidad de Buenos Aires*. This book resembles Nino's account of the democratic transition in *Radical Evil on Trial* insofar as both of them explain in detail the strategies set forth by Alfonsín's government during the immediate days after the president took office in regards to the trials and the normalisation of the UBA, respectively. They also account for the fluent communication that intellectuals established with the higher ranks of the government in the beginning of the transition and how this communication became, gradually, less frequent.

<sup>26</sup> Romero, *A History of Argentina*, p. 258.

government was the resolution of the Beagle conflict. This had been a long-term territorial dispute between Chile and Argentina over the Beagle channel, which connects the Atlantic and the Pacific in the southern regions of both countries. In 1984, Argentina signed a treaty of peace and friendship with Chile, which put an end to the one-hundred-year conflict. Encouraged by these achievements, the government attempted to pass another important law to democratise the unions, traditionally controlled by the Peronist Party and by autocratic leaders. Ultimately, the government failed to pass the bill due to the firm opposition of Peronist unions, which hit back at the government forcefully, organising multiple general strikes and demanding his exit from power.<sup>27</sup> However, Alfonsín still had enough legitimacy to resist the Peronist opposition in the first years of his presidency.

In summary, the government implemented with relative ease very important measures of cultural, educational, and social reform in the years that followed the 1983 election. The administration was putting into practice the social democratic project that Alfonsín explicitly championed during his campaign. However, the most important goal, and at the same time the most problematic one, was the delivery of justice for crimes committed under the dictatorship, which demanded, in first place, a trial of high-ranking members of the military. On the one hand, the military refused to try their own members for what they considered a legitimate war against subversion, and they still retained enough power to threaten the precarious democratic stability achieved by the government. On the other hand, there was a question of complex culpability: some people had planned the deeds while others had committed them, in many cases following orders from superiors. Moreover, massive Human Rights violations could not have been committed without the acquiescence of many people, including some political and union leaders, the media, sectors of the Catholic Church, and the business class.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the design of

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<sup>27</sup> A detailed analysis of the attempts made by the government to democratise unions and the failed negotiations between Alfonsín administration and Peronist union leaders is Juan Carlos Portantiero, 'La concertación que no fue: de la ley Mucci al Plan Austral', in *Ensayos sobre la transición democrática*, ed. by Nun and Portantiero, pp. 139-73.

<sup>28</sup> The question about the complicity of civil society with the 1976 dictatorship remains a controversial issue in Argentina today. Two major events under the dictatorial period are usually considered the expression of such complicity: the 1978 World Cup and the Falklands/Malvinas War in April-June 1982. In both cases, massive demonstrations in support of Argentina took over the streets of the country's main cities, expressing a nationalism that, for those who firmly opposed the dictatorship, was regarded as an endorsement of the

the trials against Human Rights violations required an elaborate, subtle and well-articulated judicial strategy that would demarcate the hierarchy of responsibilities in the violence perpetrated by the military. On this front, the President turned to experts for advice. As the quote at the beginning of this section makes clear, Alfonsín fostered a fluent communication with intellectuals. For instance, for the judicial strategy regarding the trials against the military, he sought the advice of a group of jurists comprising Carlos Santiago Nino, Jaime Malamud Goti and Martín Farrell, three prominent political and legal philosophers who worked closely with Alfonsín since the times of the presidential campaign. Called ‘the philosophers’ by Alfonsín, they advised the President throughout the elaboration of the judicial strategy to implement retroactive justice.<sup>29</sup>

The trial against the military juntas was a key event in the democratic transition.<sup>30</sup> These trials were necessary not only to satisfy the demands of the Human Rights movements, they were also necessary for the establishment of a solid democracy. Nino’s account of the strategy he and his colleagues outlined and Alfonsín’s stance with regard to the retroactive justice can shed light on the complexity of the task:

With regard to retroactive justice, the Radical Party, under Alfonsín’s leadership, believed that full investigation and some degree of punishment were crucial steps in overcoming the dynamics that had long plagued and divided Argentine society – concentration, anomie, corporatism, and ideological dualism. Alfonsín’s vision, therefore, was moved by forward-looking considerations. But these considerations were, of course, two-sided: Even though Alfonsín believed that punishment of the worst abuses were essential for the long-term consolidation of democracy, he was also fully

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military government. A comprehensive study of civic complicity to the coup is David Sheinin, *Consent of the damned: Ordinary Argentines in the Dirty War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012). The question about the complicity of civil society and non-State actors with the military dictatorship has also been pointed out in most historical accounts heretofore mentioned, such as Romero’s *A History of Argentina*, Novaro and Palermo’s *La dictadura militar*, and Halperín Donghi’s *La larga agonía*. Some works have also traced specific contributions and support from diverse corporations to the dictatorship. For example, *Empresarios, tecnócratas y militares. La trama corporativa de la última dictadura*, ed. by Alfredo Pucciarelli (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2004) presents several essays which analyse the relationship between corporations and businesses with the last military dictatorship in Argentina. Alvaro Abós has studied the relationship between some unions and the military juntas, which Alfonsín denounced in times of the campaign as the ‘union-militar pact’. Alvaro Abós, *La organizaciones sindicales y el poder militar (1976-1983)* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1984).

<sup>29</sup> Retroactive justice, in the view of Carlos Nino, occurs when a new democratic government decides to use newly enacted criminal law to prosecute members of the previous authoritarian regime accused of having committed atrocities. Nino, p. vii.

<sup>30</sup> The two most detailed accounts of the trials against the juntas, from which this section draws, are Acuña and Smulovitz, ‘Militares en la transición argentina’, and Nino.

aware that a miscalculation could jeopardize democracy. [...] If he threatened democracy through trials and weighty sentences to discourage Human Rights violations, he might in fact be risking future violations.<sup>31</sup>

In other words, it was deemed imperative, for the future of democracy in Argentina, to punish the military, but in a way that would avoid an excessive reaction from groups that had favoured the dictatorship. Particularly, the government sought to limit the scope of the trials to the main perpetrators, as the criminals had to be punished according to legal process, but the military as an institution had to be safeguarded to ensure democratic stability.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, guerrilla leaders who had ordered assassinations and kidnappings in the years of revolutionary turmoil had to be tried as well. Thus, in his first week as President, Alfonsín took a number of important decisions regarding these issues. First, he ordered the detention of the members of the military juntas that governed the country between 1976 and 1983; second, he ordered the prosecution of the guerrilla leaders Eduardo Firmenich, Fernando Vaca Narvaja, Enrique Gorriarán Merlo and Roberto Perdía (most of them belonged to the Montoneros and ERP).<sup>33</sup> He also sent to Congress a bill to nullify the amnesty laws sanctioned by the military.

Lastly, the government created the Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas (CONADEP), comprising renowned scholars, politicians and journalists.<sup>34</sup> The CONADEP had to collect all the denunciations and gather evidence about the disappeared people, the whereabouts of appropriated children – namely, babies who had been taken from political prisoners and illegally given in adoption to members of the military or

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<sup>31</sup> Nino, p. 110.

<sup>32</sup> Acuña and Smulovitz, p. 50.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 51-52. As Acuña and Smulovitz suggest, the strategy behind the decision of trying the members of ERP and Montoneros was to show the military, and civil society in general, that the government was not carrying out an anti-military crusade, but that it was bringing justice to all victims of violence, including those who had been killed by guerrilla groups. This gave birth to the so-called ‘theory of two demons’, according to which both the military and the violent left had been responsible for the exacerbated violence of the period. This theory has been subjected to constant debate since 1983 and has been usually used politically to accuse those people who have tried to present, from the left, a critical view of the revolutionary violence in Argentina. For an overview of the discussions regarding the theory of two demons see Marina Franco, ‘La “teoría de los dos demonios” en Argentina: un símbolo de la posdictadura en Argentina’, *A Contracorriente*, vol. 11, no. 2 (Winter 2014), 22-52.

<sup>34</sup> Acuña and Smulovitz., p. 53.

civilians – and refer these cases to the courts.<sup>35</sup> After one year of steady work, the CONADEP presented a final document in September 1984, which revealed in detail the horrific system of kidnapping, torture and killing exercised by the military during the dictatorship. The report was published shortly after under the title *Nunca Más*, becoming a bestseller in Argentina and the most important document about disappeared people in Argentina.<sup>36</sup> *Nunca Más* was also one of the main sources of evidence used in the trials against the juntas, which began in 1985.<sup>37</sup>

In the beginning, the government sought to limit the trials to military jurisdiction. Alfonsín sought the Armed Forces to establish different levels of responsibility and try their own members according to their own criteria. By doing this, the President prevented his government from taking the problematic decision of delimiting levels of responsibility for crimes against Human Rights, insofar as the left and Human Rights associations expected that all members of the army involved in the repression were tried, and not – as the government pursued – to concentrate the guilt in a small group of people with decision-making capacity.<sup>38</sup> At first, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the highest court of the military justice, agreed to carry out an investigation of its own members. However, the result of this investigation was that, in view of the Supreme Council, military activity against subversion had been unobjectionable. In this context,

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<sup>35</sup> The members of the CONADEP were: Ernesto Sabato (President), Ricardo Colombres, René Favaloro, Hilario Fernández Long, Carlos T. Gattinoni, Gregorio Klimovsky, Marshal Meyer, Jaime F. de Nevares, Eduardo Rabossi, Magdalena Ruiz Guiñazú, Santiago Marcelino López, Hugo Diógenes Piucill, and Horacio Hugo Huarte. Carlos Nino also advised Alfonsín on the creation of this commission. In his account: 'I played an active role in defining CONADEP's membership. While Malamud was working with Minister of Justice Raúl Alconada Sempé on the appointment of judges, I worked with José Ignacio López, a Catholic journalist who was Alfonsín's spokesman, on the formation of the CONADEP. I suggested Rabossi, Klimovsky, Fernández Long, and Meyer, as well Colombres on the advice of Carrió. Although we wanted representation of the Human Rights organizations, these organizations were sceptical about the commission and ultimately refused to participate. [...] The Human Rights organizations later cooperated intimately with CONADEP, once they recognized the seriousness with which it approached its tasks.' Nino, p. 73.

<sup>36</sup> CONADEP, *Nunca Más. Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (EUDEBA: Buenos Aires, 1996).

<sup>37</sup> Emilio Crenzel has studied the conformation of the CONADEP and the publication of *Nunca Más* in detail in Emilio Crenzel, *La historia política del Nunca Más. La memoria de las desapariciones en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2008). Crenzel argues that *Nunca Más* paved the way for the consolidation of a 'memory regime', which put forward a hegemonic way of reading the past through an adequate narrative style that endured throughout the years.

<sup>38</sup> Nino, pp. 76-78.

the Federal Court of Appeals took over the cases and the first public hearing of the trials against the military juntas took place on 22 April 1985.

The trials against the juntas represented a seminal event in Argentine democracy, as they disclosed to the public the atrocities committed by the military while enacting the values of equality under the law.<sup>39</sup> During almost four months, 832 people testified against the military. The victims described to the judges the torture, imprisonment, abuse, and violations they had suffered. Journalists, such as the director of the *Buenos Aires Herald* Robert Cox, revealed that they had been under pressure not to inform society about what was happening, and forensic anthropologists explained how they could identify entire families that had been shot.

The media greatly contributed to the publicity of the testimonies of hundreds of victims, as the main local newspapers closely followed the development of the trials. A special journal, *El Diario del Juicio*, was even printed on a daily basis for the duration of the hearings, with the purpose of documenting and publicising the trials.<sup>40</sup> The international media also published news related to these shocking revelations, such as the Spanish *El País*, which in July 1985 included a text by Jorge Luis Borges, who had attended one of the hearings in the Tribunales building. In the text, Borges described his shock after listening to the testimony of a survivor who had been held captive for four years in a Clandestine Detention Centre:<sup>41</sup>

He asistido, por primera y última vez, a un juicio oral. Un juicio oral a un hombre que había sufrido unos cuatro años de prisión, de azotes, de vejámenes y de cotidiana tortura. Yo esperaba oír quejas, denuestos y la indignación de la carne humana interminablemente sometida a ese milagro atroz que es el dolor físico. Ocurrió algo distinto. Ocurrió algo peor. El réprobo había entrado enteramente en la rutina de su infierno. Hablaba con simplicidad, casi con

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<sup>39</sup> For the relevance of the trial against the military juntas see, apart from the accounts provided by Nino, and Acuña and Smulovitz, Inés González Bombal, 'Nunca Más: el juicio más allá de los estrados', in *Juicio, castigos y memorias*, ed. by Acuña, pp. 193-216; and Hugo Vezzetti, *Pasado y Presente. Guerra, dictadura y sociedad en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2001).

<sup>40</sup> The daily was later published as a book as *El Diario de Juicio* (Buenos Aires: Perfil, 1985).

<sup>41</sup> The denomination 'Centro Clandestino de Detención' (CCD) was first coined by the CONADEP in *Nunca Más*. According to the report, there were around 340 CCDs across the country. The CCDs were described in the text as 'el presupuesto material indispensable de la política de desaparición de personas [...] las características edilicias de estos centros, la vida cotidiana en su interior, revelan que fueron concebidos antes que para la lisa y llana supresión física de las víctimas para someterlas a un minucioso y planificado despojo de los atributos propios de cualquier ser humano.' CONADEP, pp. 54-55.

indiferencia, de la picana eléctrica, de la represión, de la logística, de los turnos, del calabozo, de las esposas y de los grillos. También de la capucha.<sup>42</sup>

That same indifference in the voices of the victims or the families of the victims perceived by Borges appeared in the TV documentary *Nunca Más*, broadcast prior to the trials, in 1984. In these videos, survivors described their cruel and terrible experiences. There were parents whose children were abducted by the military in front of their eyes, kidnapped men and women who had survived torture and had seen their friends die, mothers looking for the bodies of their disappeared sons and daughters, victims explaining the system of numbers the military used to name them. Argentine audiences were now facing the truth that they did not know or refused to see in the past.

By 1985, there was nonetheless no doubt that the government, with the support of large parts of the population, was committed to the implementation of retroactive justice. In September 1985, the Chief Prosecutor Julio Strassera began summarising the prosecution evidence, and reported that at least 9000 people had disappeared. He argued that the military had implemented a system of state terrorism, and that the accused were responsible for murder and torture by acts of commission as well as omission. Finally, on 9 December 1985, the Court of Appeals publicly announced its decision. Videla and Massera, commanders of the Army and the Navy respectively, were found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. Agosti, the general who succeeded Videla as President, received four and a half years in prison. Viola, commander of the Air Force, received seventeen years in prison. Lambruschini, commander of the Navy after Massera, received eight years in prison. Other members of the juntas were acquitted. The sentences of the trial set a milestone in Argentine history and had a profound impact on society. In the words of Carlos Nino:

The court's decision was undoubtedly the most successful component of Alfonsín's strategy. Despite the pressures from different sectors and the ostensible risks, the court had conducted the trial in an extremely dignified way and, in its sober and thorough decision, had set forth principles conducive to the re-establishment of the rule of law and elementary ethical principles in Argentine life. The moral consciousness of society seems to have been deeply affected by these trials. Even though the trial was not directly televised, the

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<sup>42</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, 'Lunes, 22 de Julio de 1985', *El País*, 10 August 1985. Like the responses of civil society to the dictatorship, Borges initially endorsed the coup, while he progressively showed unacceptance towards it.

months of testimony regarding the atrocities made a perceptible impact on the minds of the people.<sup>43</sup>

After achieving this spectacular success, namely the trial against the military that had, only a few years earlier, been in power, Alfonsín's government was at its peak of popularity. This became evident when the Radical Party won the mid-term elections celebrated in November 1985.<sup>44</sup> However, towards 1987, the road became rockier for the government. The hearings of cases involving military and police officers continued during 1986 and 1987, and unleashed a reaction from the military, which began seeking to limit scope of the prosecutions.

In 1986, Alfonsín sent to Congress a draft of the so-called Full Stop law (*Ley de Punto Final*), with the purpose of bringing an end to the trials and easing the anxiety of the military. The law established a sixty-day limit for filing cases based on criminal activity during the dictatorship; otherwise, all such claims would be extinguished. The law, which deserved the strong condemnation of the left and Human Rights movements, was enacted in December 1986. Nonetheless, the Full Stop law had a boomerang effect, as courts all over the country began to file cases and over 300 high ranked officers were indicted.<sup>45</sup> In reaction to the ongoing judicial procedures, a military ultra-nationalist group, known as the *carapintadas*, attempted to overthrow the government by occupying several Army dependencies during the Easter of 1987. In opposition to the military threat, tens of thousands congregated in the Plaza de Mayo to support democracy and endorse the government. It was a day of unrest in the presidential offices. Alfonsín addressed the multitude from the balcony of the Presidential house, promising to control the situation. He then flew to Campo de mayo, where the rebels were entrenched and returned a few hours later. At 6pm, he addressed the crowds again, pronouncing a short, but emblematic speech, in which he explained that the rebels had surrendered.<sup>46</sup> His last words became part of the collective memory of the transition: 'La casa está en orden y no hay sangre en la Argentina', Alfonsín claimed from the balcony, encouraging the crowds to return home

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<sup>43</sup> Nino, p. 90.

<sup>44</sup> Romero, *A History of Argentina*, p. 271.

<sup>45</sup> Acuña and Smulovitz, p. 61.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 62-63.



with their families.<sup>47</sup>

The government won this battle, but the president had to negotiate a compromise with the rebels, promising them that he would try to establish levels of responsibility for the trials, a decision that ultimately marked the beginning of the government's political deterioration. In May 1987, Alfonsín sent to Congress a draft of the Due Obedience law (Ley de Obediencia Debida), which created the conditions for the defence of middle- and lower-ranked officers. The law was passed in June that year, but it was received with bitter criticism by national and international Human Rights movements. In this context, it became evident that the transition to democracy, especially regarding the military question, was an extraordinarily difficult process. The *carapintadas* organised several more rebellious actions in 1988, claiming amnesty and putting more pressure on the government. Moreover, towards the end of his mandate, Alfonsín had to face acute economic problems that had been overshadowed by the matter of justice, and the decrease of popular support, as Chapter 6 will examine. By the end of 1987, there was little left of the optimism and almost blind faith in democracy that the government experienced in 1983. Intellectuals followed a similar trajectory.

### Transformations in culture and the intellectual field

From the democratic transition onwards, the intellectual and cultural fields, still fragmented and dismembered, reconfigured more vigorously. During the four years that followed the 1983 elections, Argentine cultural life was, as in the political realm, being animated by the restored democracy. Films, theatre, books, and magazines significantly grew in number during these years, giving way to a sense of liberation and openness in the cultural sphere.<sup>48</sup> This cultural spring was also marked by the return from exile of

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<sup>47</sup> *Clarín*, 19 April 1987.

<sup>48</sup> In his study of the literary market in Argentina, José Luis de Diego points out that during the democratic transition there was a brief boom in Argentine literature. Hundreds of books were published on historical and journalism investigations by Argentine authors who had originally published books with foreign publishers while in exile. De Diego however claims that this boom was brief insofar as the weak economy of the country counteracted the impulse given by the political openness, as Boris Spivacow's phrase 'En este momento la situación política y cultural ayuda, pero la económica no' suggests. Quoted in José Luis de Diego, 'Un itinerario crítico sobre el mercado editorial de literatura en Argentina', *Iberoamericana*, vol. 10, no. 40 (2009), 47-61. Constanza Burucúa holds a similar argument when stating that the cinema industry

writers, journalists, scholars, and intellectuals in general. Moreover, universities – the natural environment of intellectuals – were going through important transformations, paving the way for these men and women to return to their traditional workplace.

However, the re-insertion of intellectuals into public life was not entirely smooth in all cases, and old resentments sometimes arose. Before analysing the cultural production of the period, let me refer to a number of controversies that were relevant in the literary and intellectual fields of the democratic transition. Prior to the 1983 elections, and between 1978 and 1980, writers Julio Cortázar and Liliana Heker had held a heated debate in the pages of two magazines, *Eco* and *El Ornitorrinco*, on the matter of exile. Heker defended those writers who had stayed in the country, arguing that they were supporting freedom of speech by writing in the most adverse situation possible. Cortázar, on the contrary, argued that freedom of speech was impossible within Argentina and therefore only in exile was it possible to write and speak the truth.<sup>49</sup> Another important controversy was unleashed a year later when writer Luis Gregorich, in an article published in *Clarín*, established a division between the literature produced in the country and that produced by Argentines abroad. Gregorich criticised the books published both abroad and in Argentina, concluding that both these literatures were of little value.<sup>50</sup> His article received a number of critical commentaries, which were published in *El Porteño* and *Humor*.<sup>51</sup>

These controversies ultimately indicated a watershed between those who had stayed and those who had left, leading to resentment and mistrust amongst many Argentine intellectuals, as moral accusations regarding their reaction to repression flew over the intellectual field. An anecdote might well illustrate the mistrust amongst intellectuals in the immediate aftermath of the dictatorship. Saúl Sosnowski, an Argentine Latin Americanist based at the University of Maryland, organised a conference to discuss

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experienced a boost during the first years of the transition, but that this initial impulse faded away due to economic constraints. Constanza Burucúa, *Confronting the 'Dirty War' in Argentine Cinema, 1983–1993: Memory and Gender in Historical Representations* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2009), p. 2-4.

<sup>49</sup> For a complete account of these discussions, see de Diego, *¿Quién de nosotros escribirá el Facundo?*, pp. 188-200. See also Saítta, 'La narrativa argentina'.

<sup>50</sup> Luis Gregorich, 'La literatura dividida', *Clarín*, 29 January 1981.

<sup>51</sup> See de Diego, *¿Quién de nosotros escribirá el Facundo?*, p. 192.

Argentine culture under the dictatorship and he invited different Argentine intellectuals, who arrived in College Park, Washington D.C., in December 1984 from different latitudes.<sup>52</sup> In Sosnowski's account, they experienced a very tense moment when these women and men met on the first day: 'El clima fue tenso ya antes de la inauguración. Se perfilaban estrategias de enfrentamiento y distensión; acusaciones por denuncias y silencios, por permanencias y desplazamientos geográficos.'<sup>53</sup> Sarlo, who travelled to the United States for the first time as she was invited to this conference, proposed in her presentation that the division of the intellectual field was the successful outcome of the military's attempt to dismantle the cultural and intellectual fields.<sup>54</sup> In her view, the condition of exile of many writers had not been the outcome of a free choice, but the involuntary attempt to survive.<sup>55</sup> By giving this interpretation, she was trying to bring together the two opposing sides.<sup>56</sup>

Nonetheless, apart from the disputes over exile, intellectual controversies were in general less heated during the transition, and ideological differences became less of a reason for disagreement. Juan Carlos Torres has argued that one of the main features of the cultural field in the transition was the dissolution of ideological-political borders.<sup>57</sup> In hindsight, intellectuals and writers became generally less concerned about past ideological discussions and more concerned about forward-looking problems. Most members of the Argentine new left, for example, had abandoned their partisan militancy and, although ideological discussions and divisions still defined intellectual groupings as we shall see in the following pages, they more or less shared the political 'consensus of

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<sup>52</sup> The intellectuals who participated in this conference were: Hipólito Solari Yrigoyen, Tulio Halperín Donghi, Mónica Peralta Ramos, José Pablo Feinmann, León Rozitchner, Beatriz Sarlo, Luis Gregorich, Jorge Lafforgue, Juan Carlos Martini, Noé Jitrik, Tomás Eloy Martínez, Osvaldo Bayer, Liliana Heker, Adolfo Prieto, Kive Staiff, Santiago Kovadloff, Saúl Sosnowski, Richard Morse and Jorge Balán.

<sup>53</sup> Saúl Sosnowski, 'Introducción', in *Represión y reconstrucción de una cultura: el caso argentino*, ed. by Sosnowski, pp. 7-15 (p. 8).

<sup>54</sup> Sarlo, 'El campo intelectual: un espacio doblemente fracturado'.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>56</sup> While some intellectuals and writers in this conference also tried to generate consensus among their peers, as was the case of Tomás Eloy Martínez's intervention, others such as Osvaldo Bayer and Liliana Heker criticised and objected their colleagues' reaction to the dictatorship. *Represión y reconstrucción de una cultura*, ed. by Sosnowski, pp. 187-227.

<sup>57</sup> Torre, pp. 193-97.

1983', based on a rejection of authoritarianism and a valorisation of democracy.<sup>58</sup>

One can argue that this idyllic period of culture was fostered by artists and intellectuals who shared a number of goals in the democratic transition. They concentrated their creative efforts on two different and intertwined levels. One level was backward-looking, as a revision of the immediate and long-term past was seen to be a fundamental task in order to understand the traumatic experience of the 1976-1983 period. The other level was forward-looking, as writers, intellectuals and artists now felt compelled to lay the foundations for a new Argentine cultural life.<sup>59</sup> These levels coincided with the approach of Alfonsín's government to the trials against the military juntas, insofar as the same questions defined the strategies to adopt: one was the question of how to deal with Argentina's traumatic and authoritarian past. The other question was how to prevent past mistakes in order to create a better, more democratic and freer society. The moment was lived as an opportunity to re-found a new culture and new political principles detached from earlier and more authoritarian stances.

On the backward-looking level, the revisiting of the distant and immediate past became a constant of cultural production.<sup>60</sup> Whether it was the history of the recent dictatorship or that of the post-independence period in the nineteenth century, the question of history characterised the most important cultural works of the transition. As Francine Masiello has observed, writers and artists in Argentina sought a *grand récit* that would explain their national identity, as they tried to 'recuperate a totalizing story that might tell the fate of a nation in which even accounts of minor detail serve to allegorize the national

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<sup>58</sup> Cecilia Lesgart argues that, in a 'theoretical transit', leftist intellectuals during the transition in Argentina and Chile abandoned hard-line Marxism while constituting a new leftist political identity based on the valorisation of democracy. See Lesgart, pp. 149-99.

<sup>59</sup> Sylvia Saïtta proposes a similar analysis of the literary field: 'En esos primeros años de democracia, se trataba de reconstruir un campo literario nacional definiendo, nuevamente, sus problemáticas y sus reglas de funcionamiento. Esa reconstrucción se hizo a través de, por lo menos, dos movimientos: un movimiento de revisión y crítica de la actuación de los intelectuales durante el pasado reciente, que retomaba el debate entre los de adentro y los de afuera que signó las relaciones de los intelectuales durante la dictadura; y un movimiento hacia adelante, en una reflexión sobre los modos en que la literatura participara de la reconstrucción de una cultura.' Saïtta, p. 240.

<sup>60</sup> For a detailed study on the representations of the 1976 dictatorship in culture see *Ficción y política*, ed. by Jara and Vidal, and Francine Masiello, *The Art of Transition: Latin American Cultural and Neoliberal Crisis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

dilemma.’<sup>61</sup> I have examined how intellectuals, in the case of *Punto de Vista*, already at the dawn of the dictatorship, turned to history in order to interpret the tragic present Argentines were living. The magazine also set forth a renewed national literary canon that, to a great extent, attempted to define a national identity. When democracy was restored, *Punto de Vista* continued revising the past in a new fashion and produced the most relevant interpretation of the 1970s, which the next chapter will deal with.<sup>62</sup> Literature and cinema accompanied this process in similar terms. While literature began exploring historical themes prior to 1983, films would more characteristically do so in the aftermath of the dictatorship, as the government gave a boost to film productions. As Constanza Burucúa has argued, ‘the film industry became one of the mainstays of the democratic government’s discursive strategy to reshape a somewhat damaged national identity.’<sup>63</sup>

One of the most representative films of the period was Luis Puenzo’s *La historia oficial* (1985), which had a significant impact on audiences both inside and outside the country. The film tells the story of a woman who suspects her adopted daughter was stolen from her biological mother who was, in turn, kidnapped and disappeared by the military. The starting point of the plot takes place when the female protagonist, a history teacher, meets a friend who has returned from exile. In this meeting, the friend gives an account of how she was kidnapped, tortured, raped, and later released by the military, instilling in the protagonist doubts about her daughter’s origins. This melodramatic scene was played, significantly, by two actresses, Norma Aleandro and Chunchuna Villafañe, who had

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<sup>61</sup> According to Masiello, cultural expressions in Argentina and Chile in the aftermath of dictatorships differed insofar as in the former, there was anxiety for a *grand récit*, whereas the latter country cultivated micronarratives in order to deal with the past. See Masiello, *The Art of Transition*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>62</sup> Many authors have pointed out the centrality of *Punto de Vista* in the debates about memory and the reconstruction of culture. Constanza Burucúa has argued, for example, that ‘the debate, and the associated ideas on memory and its representation, was perhaps best articulated in the pages of *Punto de Vista*.’ Burucúa, p. 31-32. Francine Masiello holds a similar appreciation, when stating that ‘la crítica durante el Proceso trató de devolver una identidad a los intelectuales, preservando un lugar para una verdadera oposición que aquellos podían reclamar como propia. Varias empresas críticas se comprometieron en esa empresa, especialmente después de 1981. Estas incluyen *Brecha*, *Crear* y *Pie de Página*, pero ninguna asumió el intento de manera tan coherente como *Punto de Vista*.’ Masiello, ‘La Argentina durante el Proceso’, p. 22.

<sup>63</sup> Burucúa, p. 2.

recently returned to Argentina from exile.<sup>64</sup> The protagonist of the film thus embarks on an investigation that leads her to better understand the past and face her authoritarian husband, whose complicity with the military had led him to appropriate the child. The film also includes actual footage of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo demanding justice at a weekly march they still organize today in the Plaza de Mayo.

In 1986, *La historia oficial* became the first Latin American film to win an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, which brought the terrible story of the theft of babies and other atrocities committed under the dictatorship to an even bigger audience. Another dimension of the film was its focus on the story of a woman who suffers the criticism and violence of her tyrant husband as she attempts to find the truth about her child. There was a certain symbolism to the focus on the female perspective, which provided a contrast with the patriarchal and authoritarian symbols rooted in Argentine society, in the film represented by male characters. Women played a very important role in the search for truth, as the most relevant Human Rights organisations, the Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, were comprised of women, while in the history of authoritarianisms in Argentina, political life had always been dominated by male figures.

Another melodrama which looked into the past from a woman's perspective was *Camila* (1984), directed by María Luisa Bemberg, the best-known woman filmmaker of the period.<sup>65</sup> The film, which traced patriarchal authoritarianism back to the distant past, was set in early-nineteenth-century Buenos Aires Province, governed at that time by the dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas. The film tells the story of Camila O'Gorman, a young woman who falls in love with a priest and runs away with him, challenging her authoritarian father's mandate to marry someone else. The lovers have to change their identities but are later discovered and sentenced to death. Although the law should not punish Camila with death, given her pregnant condition, Rosas decides to disregard the rule and hand down an exemplary punishment. Not only does the film depict a rebellious

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<sup>64</sup> Burucúa provides an analysis of *La historia oficial* and other films of the period such as *La amiga* and *Un muro de silencio*, from a gender perspective. She claims that these films promoted a new sensitivity which worked against the patriarchal and homosocial model of society endured during the dictatorship. Burucúa, pp. 153-54.

<sup>65</sup> The bibliography on María Luisa Bemberg's films is not copious, but a collection of interviews and essays on her life and work can be found in *An Argentine Passion: María Luisa Bemberg and Her Films*, ed. by Rosa Bosch, John King, and Sheila Whitaker (London: Verso, 2000).

image of women – Camila speaks her mind and confronts her father, challenging the accepted behaviour of her time – it also underscores the precariousness of the rule of law and the authoritarianism that have characterised Argentine history.

Many other important films of the period represented events from the near past, such as Héctor Olivera's *La noche de los lápices* (1986), and Rafael Filippelli's *Hay unos tipos abajo* (1985). The former depicted one of the first episodes of repression, dated in 1975 according to *Nunca Más*, in which several secondary school students who were involved in political parties were arrested and killed by the military. The latter film reconstructed the sense of insecurity and terror felt by a journalist in his daily life during the 1976 dictatorship. Other films, such as Bebe Kamín's *Los chicos de la Guerra* (1984) and the documentary *Malvinas, historia de una traición* (1984) addressed critically the matter of the Falklands/Malvinas War, while another popular film of the period, Juan José Jusid's *Asesinato en el Senado de la Nación* (1984), was set at beginning of the twentieth century and it told the real story of the assassination of a Senator in Argentina's Congress.

The reaction of intellectuals to the representation of the past brought about by new Argentine cinema was not always celebratory. Playing the role that Bourdieu typically assigns to intellectuals, namely the production of the value of the work of art, *Punto de Vista* set out to evaluate the cultural production of the transition period. The articles on cinema were particularly critical of the way the past was represented in them, especially in the most visible of them: *La historia oficial*. In a number of articles published between 1986 and 1989, Puenzo's film was often criticised for disregarding politics – as the emotional side of the events seemed more important than the historical dimension – and for reducing all aspects of film to the plot.<sup>66</sup> On the contrary, Rafael Filippelli's movies, for example, were celebrated for taking Argentine history as a 'nudo problemático' and for exploring alternative narratives of the past.<sup>67</sup> The subordination of film narratives to market trends, principally dictated by Hollywood, was a relevant aspect of the discussion about films for the Punto de Vista group. A watershed was established between those

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<sup>66</sup> Rafael Filippelli, 'Contra la realpolitik en el arte', *Punto de Vista*, no. 26 (April 1986), 4-5; Raúl Beceyro, 'Narrar la historia', *Punto de Vista*, no. 34 (July-September 1989), 30-31; and Raúl Beceyro, 'El repliegue. El cine argentino en 1989', *Punto de Vista*, no. 36 (December 1989), 33-35.

<sup>67</sup> Beceyro, 'Narrar la historia', p. 31.

market-oriented productions and those maintaining a certain aesthetic autonomy. This criterion would also apply to literary production, as we shall see. However, I agree with Constanza Burucúa that in the context of 1985, the language of family emotions was perhaps an acceptable manner to ‘communicate civic responsibilities to an audience which might not have been ready at the time for a wider look at history.’<sup>68</sup> Arguably, films like *La historia oficial* played an important role in the acknowledgment of the past for Argentine society, and the denunciation of the crimes perpetrated under the siege of state terrorism, regardless of the narrative that Puenzo chose for his film or the emotional effects the film was meant to provoke.

In literature, various novels, written in the early 1980s, sought to address the trauma of violence and authoritarianism in Argentine history prior to the democratic transition. This was the case of Juan José Saer’s *Nadie Nada Nunca* (1980), a novel that recreates an environment of uncertainty and death through the mystery of the assassinations of horses in a town in Santa Fe, a province from the ‘interior’ – as *porteños* call everything that is not Buenos Aires. It was an allegoric way to refer to the situation in Argentina, a strategy that writers largely adopted under the dictatorship. That same year, Ricardo Piglia’s *Respiración artificial* was published and, like *Camila*, the first part of the novel looked back at nineteenth century Argentina. Piglia’s novel also presented some allegoric references to the dictatorship, as the main character searches for an uncle who has mysteriously disappeared, never to find him. *Respiración artificial* sold 5000 copies by 1981, a number which surprised Piglia, as the entry of his diaries reads: ‘Era imposible imaginar que esa novela podía interesar a lectores ajenos a mi círculo de amigos.’<sup>69</sup> The language and topics explored by Piglia in his novel were obtuse for mass audiences, but literary critics considered it the most important novel of the period. The opposite reaction occurred when the best-seller *Flores robadas en los jardines de Quilmes* (1980), by Jorge Asís, became a very popular novel that, nonetheless, was harshly criticised by literary experts. Asís’ novel looked back into the recent past, to the revolutionary climate of the early 1970s through the perspective of a cynical character

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<sup>68</sup> Burucúa, p. 128.

<sup>69</sup> Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, III, p. 141.



who was not committed to any ideology but interacted with men and women closely involved in leftist political parties. The novel conveyed an ironic view of political militants in an entertaining narrative, and was later brought to the big screen in 1985.

Many other novels of the period also made use of Argentine history as one of the main materials in their narrative composition. Amongst these novels are David Viñas' *Cuerpo a Cuerpo* (1979), Osvaldo Soriano's *No habrá más penas ni olvido* (1983), Martha Mercader's *Juanamanuela mucha mujer* (1983), Andrés Rivera's *En esta dulce tierra* (1985), and Tomás Eloy Martínez' *La novela de Perón* (1985). All these novels used Argentine history, whether distant or immediate, as the main material for narrative composition.<sup>70</sup> Lastly, another two important writers who made their first public appearances in the 1980s with their initial novels are Rodolfo Fogwill, who published the *Los Pichiciegos* in 1983, a novel about the Falklands/Malvinas War, and César Aira, a prolific writer whose second novel *Ema, la Cautiva* (1981) was very well received by critics.<sup>71</sup> Fogwill and Aira, who are now world-renowned writers, anticipated new aesthetic directions, usually associated with post-modernism, which were different from the work of critically acclaimed writers of the 1980s, such as Saer and Piglia.<sup>72</sup> As they were younger than the generation of writers who had written the major novels of the late dictatorship years, they were on occasions called middle-aged writers.<sup>73</sup>

The consideration of the past in many of these novels stemmed from a question about national identity, a conundrum that the Punto de Vista group had been studying since 1978. It seemed that the question about the Argentine identity, which was at the background of the explorations of writers and intellectuals, remained unanswered in 1983.

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<sup>70</sup> Many critics have characterised the literature of the 1980s in Argentina as centred on problems regarding history and the different narratives with which the national history was enunciated. Particularly relevant are the articles by Francine Masiello, Marta Morello-Frosch and Beatriz Sarlo included in *Ficción y Política*, ed. by Jara and Vidal.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, María Teresa Gramuglio, 'Increíbles aventuras de una nieta de la cautiva [sobre César Aira, *Ema, la cautiva*]', *Punto de Vista*, no. 14 (March-July 1981), 27-28.

<sup>72</sup> Sandra Contreras, for example, claims that Aira refuted Piglia and Saer's aesthetics by exploring fiction in a more immediate, frivolous, and improvised-like manner. Sandra Contreras, *Las vueltas de César Aira* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2002), p. 29.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Andrés Di Tella, 'El malentendido final en dos discursos paralelos. Continúan en la Universidad de Buenos Aires las charlas entre escritores de mediana edad', *Tiempo Argentino*, 10 September 1984.

The assessment of Argentine literature that *Punto de Vista* set forth during these years was very similar to the distinctions made with regard to cinema. Sarlo and Gramuglio dedicated many articles and reviews to Argentine literature, in which the attention was placed on *how* stories were told, rather than *what* was told. The formal aspects of literary production were, in the eyes of *Punto de Vista*'s critics, of great importance, and therefore the works of Andrés Rivera, Ricardo Piglia, and Juan José Saer, which presented innovative narrative strategies, were celebrated.<sup>74</sup> On the contrary, novels which were accessible for a wider readership, given their more classic narrative, such as Asís' and Soriano's, were usually condemned.<sup>75</sup>

The main argument against best seller literature was that authors subordinated literary production to the preferences of readers, as some filmmakers subordinated their films to a cinematographic language dictated by Hollywood. In this respect, *Punto de Vista* played the role of arbiter of taste, by putting forward visions about the cultural value of cultural productions and making distinctions between them, highly praising those that reflected more the aesthetic preferences of the editors. Argentine society had suffered an acute social fragmentation under the dictatorship, and the cultural market was diversifying its offer accordingly. Now the *porteño* middle classes did not flock, as in the 1960s, to cinemas to see Ingmar Bergman films. The cultural market began to offer stratified products and the *Punto de Vista* group offered – not only through the magazine, but also at university – criteria to make the necessary cultural distinctions. *Punto de Vista* played a legitimising role, to the point that Sarlo and Gramuglio became references for writers in Argentina.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ricardo Piglia's *Respiración artificial* received a long, celebratory comment from José Sazbón in José Sazbón, 'La reflexión literaria', *Punto de Vista*, no. 11 (March-June 1980), 36-44. Also, Andrés Rivera's *En esta dulce tierra* was praised insofar as it presented an alternative version of the official history that dominated the transition. See Carlos Dámaso Martínez, 'Historia entre la razón y el delirio', *Punto de Vista*, no. 24 (August-October 1985), 37-38.

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, María Teresa Gramuglio, 'Tres novelas argentinas', *Punto de Vista*, no. 13 (November 1981), 13-6, and María Teresa Gramuglio, 'Estética y política', *Punto de Vista*, no. 26 (April 1986), 2-3. See also Beatriz Sarlo, 'Una alucinación dispersa en agonía', *Punto de Vista*, no. 21 (August 1984), 1-4, and Beatriz Sarlo, 'El saber del texto', *Punto de Vista*, no. 26 (April 1986), 6-7.

<sup>76</sup> Saïtta has highlighted the importance of Sarlo in regards to literary consecration: 'ser incorporado o no a un programa de Literatura Argentina dictado por Beatriz Sarlo – "la primera dama de las letras argentinas" como la llama *V de Vian* – funcionó, en ese sentido, como una instancia de consagración para la joven – y a veces no tan joven – literatura argentina.' Saïtta, p. 253. In a similar vein, Martín Kohan has suggested at a Conference of Argentine Literature in 2007 that writers wanted to be read by Sarlo as she was seen as a

On the forward-looking level, a series of important cultural reforms defined a new and promising cultural environment, setting the basis for the progress of culture and the arts, severely damaged in the 1976-1983 period. It has been mentioned that the government gave special support to the film industry. In 1984, the abolition of censorship was sanctioned and filmmaker Manuel Antín was appointed director of the Instituto Nacional de Cine y Artes Audiovisuales.<sup>77</sup> The government was particularly interested in reconstructing culture within Argentina, but also in showing the world, through cinema, the new democratic values flourishing in the country. In this sense, the government played an important role as a dynamic agent of the cultural field, especially during the first years of Alfonsín's government. Apart from films, new cultural institutions were either founded or transformed. The Centro Cultural Rojas, which belonged to the University of Buenos Aires, was created in 1984. It was a cultural complex located in downtown Buenos Aires that offered workshops, theatre, art exhibitions, film screenings and many other activities, and became a cultural symbol of the period. Daniel Link has conveyed an insightful view of El Rojas:

En los ochenta, el Rojas, más que un mundo entero, era una galaxia que proliferaba. Y a veces esa proliferación asustaba y fastidiaba a cierta gente, con razones justas. Yo mismo suelo ser bastante escéptico en relación con una oferta cultural que superpone al mismo tiempo cursos de ikebana, maratones pianísticas, clásicos del cine ruso, exhibiciones de capoeira y un congreso hiperespecializado al que vienen invitados de todo el mundo. Pero con ese estilo, el Rojas consiguió dejar una marca insoslayable en la cultura de Buenos Aires de los años ochenta y noventa y no conozco otra institución que haya distribuido tanto saber tan indiscriminadamente.<sup>78</sup>

Link's description singularly reflects the moment of aperture lived in the 1980s in the cultural field, in which culture greatly diversified. In this respect, El Rojas was, in this mixture of ikebana workshops and international conferences, perhaps the most postmodern side of the profound transformation suffered by the UBA in this period.

The government appointed Francisco Delich as temporary director of the UBA in

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main judge in the literary field. Cited in Analía Gerbaudo, 'La fundación de una obra: Juan José Saer y las clases de Beatriz Sarlo en la Universidad de Buenos Aires (1984-1998)', *Revista de Humanidades*, no. 22 (December 2010), 79-94 (p. 87).

<sup>77</sup> Burucúa, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Link, *Una lectura: una vida*, p. 132.

1983, and assigned him the task of re-establishing the normal functioning of the institution. This was not an easy mission, as it entailed the re-establishment of the University's self-governance, the revision of all irregular contracts from the dictatorship period, the incorporation of new academic staff under the basis of regular procedures, the creation of new departments, and the establishment of a new entry system.<sup>79</sup> For almost three years, the UBA went through a radical transformation, fortunately for new student cohorts, who were now able to attend lectures by prominent Argentine scholars and intellectuals who, in many cases, had been expelled from this institution by the military dictatorship.

In this context, many of the intellectuals around the Punto de Vista group accepted positions at the University of Buenos Aires. From 1983 onwards, Beatriz Sarlo, María Teresa Gramuglio, Josefina Ludmer, and David Viñas became senior professors at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters. Beatriz Sarlo, in charge of the Department of Argentine Literature was now able to teach many of the topics she had explored in *Punto de Vista* since 1978 and in the workshops she used to deliver at the 'catacombs university' (see Chapter 3).<sup>80</sup> Some of these topics included Borges' urban criollismo, avant-garde movements in the 1920 and 1930s, the theoretical framework provided by the sociology of culture, and the literature of Juan José Saer (see Chapters 2 and 3). She thus introduced significant changes in the syllabus, as now the program was based on more contemporary readings and up-to-date bibliography, since the previous syllabus was mostly based on bibliographical sources from the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>81</sup>

Intellectuals who were returning to Argentina from Mexico, such as Emilio de Ípola and Juan Carlos Portantiero, also became senior Professors at the Faculty of Sociology at UBA where they also established new syllabi, based on the sociological knowledge they

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<sup>79</sup> Delich, pp. 29-34.

<sup>80</sup> According to the study programs of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at UBA from 1984 to 1987, Beatriz Sarlo became head of the Department ('Profesora Titular de Cátedra') of Argentine Literature II (twentieth century) in 1984, David Viñas of Argentine Literature I (nineteenth century) in 1987, Josefina Ludmer of Literary Theory in 1986, and María Teresa Gramuglio of Nineteenth Century Literature in 1987. Universidad de Buenos Aires, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Programas de estudio (1980-1987).

<sup>81</sup> Universidad de Buenos Aires, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Programas de estudio Literatura Argentina II, 1980-1987.

had acquired during the years of exile.<sup>82</sup> Oscar Terán and Carlos Altamirano also joined the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, where they founded the department of Argentine and Latin American Thought, focused on the study of Argentina and Latin American cultural history.<sup>83</sup> Hilda Sabato became senior professor of the Department of Argentine History, and Hugo Vezzetti served as temporary head of the Faculty of Psychology, with the mission of bringing the psychology syllabi up to date.<sup>84</sup>

The series of swift changes in the cultural field, and in the UBA in particular, entailed a displacement of intellectuals: if they had been relegated to a marginal space in the years of the dictatorship, when they worked in clandestine workshops and outside academic institutions; now, in the newly-born democratic period, they were recognised as experts, which was reflected in their immediate incorporation to the university. Altamirano, Aricó, de Ípola, Portantiero, Sarlo, Sabato, and Vezzetti also became Senior researchers at the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET), which is the main national funding body for research in Argentina.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, not only did constraints on freedom of speech no longer exist, the financial precariousness in which many intellectuals had lived under the dictatorship became, in the transition, less of a problem, as they moved to more stable jobs. The moment was certainly lived by intellectuals with excitement and even excessive optimism, as Sarlo acknowledged years later:

En la transición democrática de los '80 parecía que el destino nos daba una nueva oportunidad para retomar un proyecto que tuvo muchas clausuras, fisuras, desvíos pero que es el de una Nación moderna. Yo creí ver en los '20 un momento importante de esa sociedad moderna que quisimos reencontrar en los años '80. No sé si no la he sobreactuado. No puedo independizar esos

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<sup>82</sup> Mocca, p. 103.

<sup>83</sup> Universidad de Buenos Aires, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Programas de estudio Pensamiento Argentino y Latinoamericano, 1984-1987.

<sup>84</sup> Delich, p. 78.

<sup>85</sup> See the short biography of José Aricó in the website of the University of Córdoba <<http://arico.unc.edu.ar/2016/02/22/biografia-de-jose-maria-arico/>> [accessed 17 June 2018]. See also the short biographies of Altamirano, de Ípola, Portantiero, Sarlo, Sabato, and Vezzetti available at the the Konex Foundation website, an institution that since 1980 has awarded prizes to Argentine artists, scientists, and intellectuals. <<http://www.fundacionkonex.org/>> [accessed 17 June 2018].

libros que escribí de esa idea que marcó el clima de los '80: Argentina volvía, pero en mejor forma, a tener un futuro.<sup>86</sup>

There is a sense of disillusionment in Sarlo's hesitation about the excessive faith in the future that characterised the tone of the transition, but at the same time, this quote reflects the widespread optimism that intellectuals, and society in general, experienced in the years after 1983. Perhaps not everyone, however, traced the parallel between the 1980s and the 1920s as Sarlo did. The 1920s in Argentina, as in many other Latin American nations, was a decade of rapid modernisation and economic growth.<sup>87</sup> The prosperity and openness of the 1920s – interrupted in Argentina by the 1930 military coup – was also accompanied by an advancement in culture, the adoption of avant-garde movements in arts and literature, and also, and very importantly, the consolidation of democratic citizenship rights through the 1912 Ley Sáenz Peña.<sup>88</sup>

Sarlo was in fact studying these avant-garde movements at the 1983 transition, which led her to publish her seminal book *Buenos Aires: Una modernidad periférica* (1985), where she explored the cultural life of Buenos Aires in the 1920s and 1930s through different perspectives: from literary magazines, to the emergence of 'feminine discourse', from the avant-garde movements to nationalist discourses.<sup>89</sup> In summary, Sarlo provided an analysis of the ideas at stake at the beginning of the twentieth century in order to build an argument around her notion of the culture from the River Plate as a modern periphery. This notion conveys the idea that Argentina received the influence of the changes brought about by modernity – radio, telephones, and avant-garde artistic movements – but from a peripheral position (South America) in respect to the centres of diffusion of such modern changes. Thus, the combination of political freedom and advancement of the arts in the 1920s made possible this association with 1980s Argentina

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<sup>86</sup> Hora and Trimboli, 'Beatriz Sarlo' [Interview], p. 177.

<sup>87</sup> In his fundamental study of twentieth-century Latin American literature, Gerald Martin identifies the 1920s and the 1960s as the two most prolific and ground-breaking periods in the continent's literary history. Moreover, he argues that the 1920s avant-garde was a precursor of the New Novel of the 1960s. Gerald Martin, *Journeys Through the Labyrinth* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 3-8.

<sup>88</sup> For a historical overview of this period see Tulio Halperín Donghi, 'Estudio preliminar', in *Vida y muerte de la república verdadera (1910-1930)*, ed. by Tulio Halperín Donghi (Buenos Aires: Ariel Historia, 2000), pp. 19-271.

<sup>89</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, *Una modernidad periférica. Buenos Aires 1920 y 1930* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1988).

in Sarlo's quotation.

Additionally, and keeping in mind the aforementioned forward-looking level, most of the intellectual spectrum agreed upon the imperative of endorsing democracy. Differences arose, but always within the limits of a committed support of democratic values, which in the intellectual debates of the 1960s and 1970s had been completely overshadowed by other ideological disputes and by the idea of social revolution. Broadly, there were three main political positions adopted by intellectuals: Peronism, hard-line Marxism and a line that combined certain principles of socialism with political liberalism. Those aligned with Peronism were best represented by *Unidos* magazine (1983-1991), a project led by politician Carlos 'Chacho' Álvarez, which sought to establish a platform for intellectual discussion on the new challenges for Peronism.<sup>90</sup> After the defeat of 1983, Peronism suffered a crisis, and for those intellectuals aligned with it, it was time to reconsider, or even found, the basis of a new, renovated and more democratic approach. *Unidos* was therefore aligned with what was known in the political arena as the 'renovación peronista', led by Antonio Cafiero, a movement within Peronism that incorporated liberal-democratic values, which had never been Peronism's strongest point.<sup>91</sup> In the words of Horacio González, a prominent member of *Unidos* and, arguably, the most representative Peronist intellectual still alive, the *Unidos* group utilised 'el lenguaje alfonsinista para seguir siendo peronistas. *Unidos* era una revista en el fondo alfonsinista, pero en su superficie peronista.'<sup>92</sup> However, *Unidos* opposed Alfonsín

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<sup>90</sup> As Martina Garategaray points out in her work on *Unidos*, this magazine brought together Peronists from different backgrounds, such as the journalist Mario Wainfeld, the sociologist Horacio González and the philosopher José Pablo Feinmann, who shared intellectual concerns. Martina Garategaray, 'Peronistas en transición. El proyecto político ideológico en la revista *Unidos* (1983-1991)', *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* (25 November 2010) <<http://nuevomundo.revues.org/60126>> [accessed 09 May 2018].

<sup>91</sup> After Luder's defeat, Peronism suffered an important crisis insofar the Peronist Party had never lost a democratic election in its entire history. As a result of this setback, a group of Peronists led by Antonio Cafiero gathered around the idea of generating a 'renovación peronista' that would incorporate certain liberal-democratic values to the traditional national-popular Peronist rhetoric. The group was officially constituted in 1987, when they became the main current within Peronism after winning the mid-term elections. One year later, though, Carlos Menem (originally a member of the Renovación) beat Cafiero in the Peronist Party primaries, and later, in 1989, won the Presidential elections, which resulted in the definitive decline of the Renovación. See Martina Garategaray, 'Entre Perón y Alfonsín: Notas sobre la Renovación peronista (1983-1988)', *Temas y Debates*, no. 25 (2013), 35-57.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Horacio González (London, 4 October 2014). Horacio González is a well known intellectual who has participated in different magazines from the 1980s onwards, and he was the editor of the magazine *El Ojo Mocho* from 1991 to 2008. His popularity in the public sphere, however, increased

insofar as, to some extent, the intellectuals who gathered around this magazine were sceptical of the government's discursive endorsement of formal democracy. For Peronists, more urgent than the consolidation of formal democracy and civil and political liberties, was to bring what they called 'substantive' democracy to society, referring to social and cultural equality.<sup>93</sup> Thus, in an article entitled '¿A dónde va el peronismo?', José Pablo Feinmann claimed that the problem with *alfonsinismo* was that, although committed to democracy, it did not aim to 'change history', and he recommended those who endorsed Alfonsín – in a sort of implicit reference to those gathered around *Punto de Vista* and the Club de Cultura Socialista (CCS) – to give up the democratic rhetoric in order to embrace the idea of 'national liberation'.<sup>94</sup>

The second group of intellectuals – more marginal than the other two, but relevant in order to understand the disputes within the intellectual field – was comprised of those intellectuals aligned with an extreme leftist discourse. The representative magazines of this group were *Pie de Página* (1983-1985), *Mascaró* (1984-1986), *Praxis* (1983-1986), and *La Bizca* (1985-1986), all edited by a younger generation to the Punto de Vista group. Although they were not particularly influential magazines, they represented quite accurately the standpoint of a more intransigent left that accused an older generation of leftist intellectuals of betraying their previous beliefs.<sup>95</sup> In *Praxis*, for example, theoretical problems of Marxism were discussed, but the superiority of Marxism and the endorsement of a socialist future were always in the background of analyses. The Praxis group thus sustained a critique of liberal democracy, and considered Alfonsín's government an expression of a social-democratic movement that they rejected in favour of a more

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since he was appointed Director of the National Library by President Néstor Kirchner in 2005, a position traditionally reserved for renowned intellectuals.

<sup>93</sup> The discussion substantive democracy versus formal democracy defined to a great extent the political positions adopted by intellectuals during the transition. While those in the Club de Cultura Socialista revalorised the set of formal institutions as a basic component of democracy, namely formal democracy, others, such as the members of *Unidos*, believed that a political regime based on formal democracy was insufficient without redistributive politics, social justice and direct participation. For an overview of this discussion see Lesgart, pp. 13-19. Also, see the roundtable organised by *Unidos*, in which they invited Altamirano, Aricó and Portantiero as members of the Club de Cultura Socialista to discuss this topic, and which exemplifies very clearly the two positions at stake. *Unidos*, 'Democracia y cambio social', *Unidos*, no. 6 (August 1985), 115-25.

<sup>94</sup> José Pablo Feinmann, '¿A dónde va el peronismo?', *Unidos*, no. 4 (December 1984), 20-32.

<sup>95</sup> For an overview of the stance adopted by these magazines see Patiño, *Intelectuales en transición*, p. 17.



revolutionary process.<sup>96</sup> By the time that *Praxis* was published, *La Bizca* also set out to challenge the democratic discourse and abandonment of Marxism by leftists intellectuals such as those joined together in *Punto de Vista*. In an article published in *La Bizca* 3 (1986), the editors claimed:

Asistimos a la conmemoración anual de la crisis del marxismo, advertimos que como buenos reformistas nuestros intelectuales ejercen una nueva versión del marxismo legal. [...] Antes, en nombre del ser nacional, las tradiciones, es decir en nombre de lo viejo, la izquierda era estigmatizada por ser lo nuevo, lo subversivo, la que quería cambiarlo todo; ahora, en nombre de lo moderno, la izquierda es recalcitrante, ingenua, infantil, arcaica.<sup>97</sup>

While intellectuals who had supported Alfonsín were harshly criticised in this statement for adopting a reformist viewpoint, they were also recognised as the most prominent figures of the Argentine leftist intelligentsia, insofar as the editors of *La Bizca* did not refer to them as one faction within the intellectual field but as ‘the left’ in Argentina. In this same instalment, a joint declaration was published, which was the result of an encounter of cultural magazines in 1986, in which *Pie de Página*, *Mascaró*, *La Bizca*, *Praxis*, and *Crisis* (which was re-launched in 1986 for a brief period) participated.<sup>98</sup> The declaration was very critical of Alfonsín’s government as it rejected the cultural policies implemented under his administration, claimed that censorship had not been yet completely abolished, and advocated for grassroots and insurrectional movements across Latin America.<sup>99</sup> This group of magazines addressed much of their criticism towards intellectuals who were occupying important roles in the transition and were putting

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<sup>96</sup> In the editorial of issue 2, *Praxis* analysed Alfonsín’s triumph in the presidential elections as the outcome of both society’s willing of change and Alfonsín’s strategy of bringing together different political sectors. Although the editors did not criticise Alfonsín as harshly as they criticised the Peronists, they interpreted his victory as the manifestation of moderate stances that did not seek real change. In the view of the *Praxis* group, the most desirable future was the triumph of popular struggles and the left, which, due to the repression suffered during the dictatorship, still had to recompose. *Praxis*, ‘Balance de las elecciones’, *Praxis*, no. 2 (Summer 1984), 1-3, 161-176.

<sup>97</sup> *La Bizca*, ‘El intelectual y la política’, *La Bizca*, no. 3 (Spring 1986), 3-6.

<sup>98</sup> For an analysis of the second period of *Crisis*, marked by problems and divisions within the editorial board see Adriana Bocchino, ‘*Crisis*. 2ª Época (1986-1987). Una revista con los tiempos cambiados’, *CELEHIS*, no. 17 (2005-2006), 77-96.

<sup>99</sup> *La Bizca*, ‘Declaración de las revistas participantes en el I Encuentro de Revistas Culturales’, *La Bizca*, no. 3 (Spring 1986), 5.

forward a revision of Marxism, as the latter were accused of reformist, traitors to the revolution, or simply ‘legal Marxists’.<sup>100</sup>

Finally, the third group was comprised of those intellectuals who, on different levels, supported Alfonsín’s government. The Punto de Vista group, at least between 1983 and 1987, was part of this group, as they explicitly supported Alfonsín in the elections and celebrated the new policies the Radical Party implemented during the first years in power. In the editorial published after the election, for example, the editors claimed that Argentines had cast their votes not only against the dictatorship but also for a candidate – Alfonsín – who represented the best political option:

El alfonsinismo sintonizó no sólo necesidades reales de la sociedad argentina, sino también su expresión más difusa: estados de ánimo, huellas dejadas por las experiencias de la década (y no sólo por la dictadura militar), tensiones renovadoras que provenían del nuevo electorado juvenil marcado profundamente por una subcultura con rasgos antiautoritarios. Su discurso, que no estuvo mayormente signado por la promesa de cambios espectaculares, enfatizaba algunas certidumbres en las que una parte de la sociedad identificó una renovación menos aparatosa que profunda del funcionamiento institucional deseable para que el país encare las tareas de reconstrucción, sin que ellas signifiquen sacrificar la reparación moral y material de lo sucedido en estos años [...]. En suma: contra la prepotencia de los fuertes, de los grupos de poder, de las camarillas, era el mensaje que, tramado con el preámbulo de la Constitución, fue vivido como algo a la vez nuevo y posible.<sup>101</sup>

The language with which the Punto de Vista group analysed Alfonsín’s victory underlines the new main themes in the transition: youth, anti-authoritarianism, institutional functioning, the reconstruction of the country, and moral and material reparations. These words represented the main issues to be solved by *alfonsinismo*, which other intellectuals, not only those in *Punto de Vista*, also endorsed. The members of *Controversia*, who were returning from Mexico, also experienced the optimism of this election. In the view of Portantiero, one of the main figures of this group:

A mi regreso ya empezaba a vivirse cierta euforia democrática. Yo llegué en julio, las elecciones fueron en octubre. Me acuerdo que fui y me emocioné hasta las lágrimas en un acto que hizo Alfonsín en la cancha de Ferro [...]. Yo

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<sup>100</sup> An example of this critique is James Petras’ article from 1990 in which he accused Latin American intellectuals who had obtained posts at government institutions of detractors in a rather heated tone. See James Petras, ‘The Metamorphosis of Latin America’s Intellectuals’, *Latin American Perspectives*, no. 65 (Spring 1990), 102-12.

<sup>101</sup> Punto de Vista, ‘Editorial’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 19 (December 1983), 2-3 (p. 3).

viví con mucho entusiasmo lo de Alfonsín. Me acuerdo de ese clip propagandístico que era extraordinario, con el recitado del Preámbulo [de la Constitución]. Te llevaba a la mejor época que era la infancia, que eso tiene un valor casi sagrado: te colocaba frente a un juramento.<sup>102</sup>

Although none of these intellectuals were affiliated with the Radical Party, nor had they ever participated in it, they enthusiastically supported Alfonsín's candidacy, and felt excitement over the transition that they saw as an opportunity to intervene in the debates of the day. The organisation that most represented them was the CCS, founded in 1984 by members of *Punto de Vista* and former members of *Controversia* who were returning from Mexico, and one of the most representative institutions of the transition.

### Club de Cultura Socialista

The CCS was a club for political and intellectual discussion, founded in Buenos Aires, in July 1984. It was a meeting hub for scholars, politicians, journalists, and artists who believed that it was imperative to make a contribution to the consolidation of democracy through an intellectual and progressive perspective.<sup>103</sup> Since its foundation and up to 2008, when it closed down, the Club hosted a significant number of local and foreign scholars who lectured on different topics and engaged in discussions with at least two generations of intellectuals in Argentina. Hence, for more than twenty years, the CCS was an important feature of the Argentine intellectual field. Nevertheless, it was during the years of the transition that the Club had a leading role in the intellectual field, hosting activities every week and providing a platform for discussion and debate for many intellectuals who, after so many years of repression, were eager to have their voices heard.

In its origins, the CCS was a result of the alliance established between

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<sup>102</sup> Mocca, pp. 102-103.

<sup>103</sup> The literature on the Club de Cultura Socialista is rather scarce. Pablo Ponza has authored a first brief essay on the development of the CCS in Pablo Ponza, 'El Club de Cultura Socialista y la gestión Alfonsín: transición a una nueva cultura política plural y democrática', *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* (15 February 2013) < <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/65035> >[accessed on 30 January 2018]; and Josefina Elizalde has also offered a brief description of the CCS in Josefina Elizalde, 'La izquierda intelectual en la recuperación democrática en la Argentina: la experiencia del Club de Cultura Socialista y dos miradas críticas sobre historia y memoria', *Usages Public du Passé* (November 2015) < <http://usagespublicsdupasse.ehess.fr/la-izquierda-intelectual-en-la-recuperacion-democratica-en-la-argentina-la-experiencia-del-club-de-cultura-socialista-y-dos-miradas-criticas-sobre-historia-y-memoria/> >[accessed 15 May 2017] Also, a description of the CCS can be found in Roniger, pp. 145-6.

*Controversia* and *Punto de Vista* prior to 1983 (see Chapter 3). Its founding group comprised the entire staff of *Punto de Vista* (Carlos Altamirano, Beatriz Sarlo, María Teresa Gramuglio, Hilda Sabato and Hugo Vezzetti), former members of *Controversia* (José Aricó, Sergio Bufano, Juan Carlos Portantiero, Oscar Terán, and Jorge Tula,), and other intellectuals who, in the majority of cases, were returning from Mexico (Marcelo Cavarozzi, Alberto Díaz, Emilio de Ípola, Rafael Filippelli, Ricardo Graziano, Arnaldo Jáuregui, Domingo Maio, Ricardo Nudelman, José Nun, Osvaldo Pedroso, Sergio Rodríguez, and Jorge Sarquís). Although all members of the founding group actively participated in the project, Aricó was the indisputable leader, until his death in 1991, after which the club was re-named Club de Cultura Socialista José Aricó.<sup>104</sup> The Club's original name was inspired in nineteenth-century political clubs that were organised by liberal intellectuals and politicians who had returned to Buenos Aires from exile after the fall of Rosas' dictatorship in 1953, with the aim of gathering the people's support to their candidacy for legislators.<sup>105</sup>

The idea of the Club, thus, implied a sense of openness and camaraderie that was different from the dynamics of more structured organisations, such as political parties. Its founders wanted the CCS to be an organisation open to everyone, regardless of political affiliation or ideological background, as they intended to avoid the dogmatic and sectarian attitudes that had traditionally divided the left in Argentina.<sup>106</sup> However, the CCS was also founded on the basis of a defined political stance, which its members had delineated during the dictatorship period. This political view was characterised by the revision of their previous ideological stances – in particular, the revision of Marxism – and the revalorisation of democracy. Thus, as the Club's declaration of principles reads, the renewal of the left and the consolidation of democratic practices were seen as two main

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<sup>104</sup> In Portantiero's account, 'El Club era Pancho. En los lugares en que Pancho era organizador era a la vez el jefe. Porque además tenía esa virtud.' Mocca, p. 108.

<sup>105</sup> See Pilar González Bernaldo, 'Los clubes electorales durante la secesión del Estado de Buenos Aires (1852-1861)', in *Ciudadanía política y formación de las naciones*, ed. by Hilda Sabato (México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999), pp. 142-61.

<sup>106</sup> For instance, in a questionnaire for *Rinascita* magazine, Aricó stated that 'El Club se coloca explícitamente fuera de la esfera de los partidos políticos y de la izquierda organizada, para poder encarar una actividad a la que concibe como "comprometida" y "libre" a la vez.' José Aricó, draft of a text for *Rinascita* magazine (17 January 1986). Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Biblioteca María Aricó, Archivo José María Aricó, Documentos, Caja 3, Folio 21.

priorities:

Provenientes de diferentes experiencias y tradiciones políticas, encaramos esta iniciativa con la certidumbre de que las posiciones socialistas no superarán su colocación periférica en el escenario nacional ni su reiterada tendencia a la disgregación e incapacidad política si no abren paso a una nueva reflexión teórica y a una nueva cultura política en el área de la izquierda [...]. La democracia y la transformación social estarán en el centro de las preocupaciones del Club.<sup>107</sup>

Although the CCS would progressively become more of a social-intellectual meeting space and less of a political-programmatic project, the declaration of principles conveys the political perspective on which the CCS was founded. Its goal was certainly ambitious: to reconstruct the culture of a democratic socialism in Argentina, which, like many other projects during the transition, seemed more than likely in 1984.

During its first months, the activities in the CCS were relatively modest. Generally, the members met twice a week to discuss a text authored by one of them, and in many cases published in the pages of *Punto de Vista*.<sup>108</sup> The first meetings were focused on very broad and general topics, such as the rethinking of the left and the debate about democracy. All members of the CCS enthusiastically engaged in theoretical discussions about the problems of socialism in the new context, the intricate conflict between the traditional left and the new democratic process, new political theories in vogue, and cultural projects in the transition. The last meetings in 1984, though, focused on more specific issues, such as university reform, the Beagle conflict, the economic program of the Radical government and an assessment of Alfonsín's eight months in office.<sup>109</sup> So

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<sup>107</sup> Club de Cultura Socialista, 'Declaración de Principios', *Punto de Vista*, no. 22 (December 1984), 40-1.

<sup>108</sup> For example, Juan Carlos Portantiero gave a talk about the political theory of socialism on July 27, 1984, based on his article 'Socialismo y democracia: una relación difícil', published in *Punto de Vista* no. 20 (May 1984). This and other activities have been documented in an unpublished notebook in which Sarlo registered the first sessions organised by the Club, to which I have had access.

<sup>109</sup> Beatriz Sarlo's notebook provides a complete list of the talks organised in 1984, which I reproduce here: 'Socialismo y democracia hoy' by José Aricó (July 20); 'La izquierda y el proceso de democratización' by Carlos Altamirano (July 24); 'Teoría política del socialismo' by Juan Carlos Portantiero (July 27); 'Sobre la crisis del marxismo' by Oscar Terán (July 31); 'Sobre problemas de la cultura desde una perspectiva socialista' by Beatriz Sarlo (August 3); 'Sentido común, Ciencia, Política' by José Nun (August 7); 'Partidos Políticos' by Marcelo Cavarozzi (August 10); 'Sobre el análisis de Giussani sobre *La política como guerra* de Pietro Ingrao' (missing date); 'Mesa redonda: ocho meses de gobierno radical' by Juan Carlos Portantiero, Ricardo Nudelman, and José Nun (August 21); 'Sobre Chile' by 'Lucho' and Angel Flisfisch (August 24); 'La izquierda en el gobierno y sus proyectos' by Christine Buci-Glucksmann (August 28); Untitled lecture by León Rozitchner (August 31); 'Genealogía del concepto de hegemonía' by Ernesto Laclau (September 4); 'El socialismo: perspectiva argentina' by Torcuato Di Tella (September 7); 'Sobre

thriving was the CCS that a few months after its foundation, Portantiero stated that the CCS was ‘un hecho en la vida cultural de Buenos Aires’, exhibiting a high optimism over its importance.<sup>110</sup>

Later on, in 1984 and 1985, renowned intellectuals from abroad were also invited to talk about issues related to their fields of expertise. Two well-known philosophers lectured on their respective research topics during August 1984: Christine Buci-Glucksmann, a French scholar from the University of Vincennes, delivered a lecture on the experience of leftist governments in France and Italy. Later, Ernesto Laclau, the Argentine philosopher and main reference of Post-Marxism, talked about the genealogy of hegemony as a concept. Laclau’s talk suggests how contemporary the CCS was in the latest discussions regarding the left, as Laclau’s influential book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, related to the topics discussed in this talk in Buenos Aires, was published only a few months later.<sup>111</sup>

In addition, the CCS was well connected with the European left-wing intelligentsia. Aricó, for example, had close connections with intellectuals from the Italian Communist Party who were revising the legacy of Marxism and revalorising liberal-democratic institutions, and were also publishing the magazine *Rinascita*.<sup>112</sup> The CCS also co-organised a series of activities with the support of foundations aligned with Eurocommunism such as the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, linked to the Social-Democratic Party of Germany; the Fundación Pablo Iglesias, linked to the Spanish Socialist Worker’s Party, and the Institut Socialiste d’Etudes et de Recherches, a French socialist institute. However, as a Ludolfo Paramio – sociologist and politician from the Spanish Socialist

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el Beagle’ (November 10); ‘Sobre economía’ by Carlos Ábalo (November 16); ‘La reforma universitaria’ by Hugo Vezzetti (November 30); ‘Reunión coyuntura sobre Alfonsín’ (December 7); ‘Una cultura crítica’ (December 17); ‘Cuestión sindical’ by Carlos Suárez (December 21).

<sup>110</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, Personal Notebook.

<sup>111</sup> Ernesto Laclau has been described as the ‘foremost exponent of a distinctively Post-Marxist approach to social analysis’ and as a very influential figure for scholars in the social sciences and the humanities in the past decades. David Howarth, ‘Introduction’, in *Ernesto Laclau: Post-Marxism, populism, and critique*, ed. by David Howarth (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1-20 (p. 1-2). For an analysis of Laclau’s trajectory see also Omar Acha, ‘Del populismo marxista al postmarxista: la trayectoria de Ernesto Laclau en la Izquierda Nacional (1963-2013)’, *Archivos de historia del movimiento obrero y la izquierda*, no. 3 (2013), 57-78.

<sup>112</sup> Aricó, for example, filled a questionnaire about the CCS for the magazine of the Italian Communist Party *Rinascita* (see footnote 106 in this chapter).

Workers' Party – argued in an article published in *Punto de Vista* 30, Eurocommunism was in a state of decay in Europe, though he claimed, as his fellows from the CCS, for a restructuring of socialism based on the reformist legacy of Eurocommunism and Postmarxism.<sup>113</sup>

Alongside the talks, beginning in 1985, the CCS organised workshops and seminars usually conducted by its own members. It is possible to trace in these workshops a consolidated division of labour: José Aricó was usually in charge of seminars related to the history of socialism and labour movements in Argentina and Latin America; Portantiero was the expert in political theory; Sarlo's and Altamirano's lectures were focused on culture, primarily Argentine culture, and intellectual history.<sup>114</sup> In these workshops, intellectuals from the CCS had the opportunity to convey to the general public – as those who attended the lectures were not necessarily university students – what they had explored during their years in exile. Most of these studies, which were in many cases preliminarily published as articles in *Punto de Vista* and other magazines, later became important books from the period. As mentioned, Sarlo published *Buenos Aires: Una modernidad periférica* in 1985. Additionally, Aricó wrote *La cola del diablo: Itinerario de Gramsci en América Latina* in 1988, and Portantiero and Nun published *Ensayos sobre la transición democrática en Argentina* in 1987. *La cola del diablo* is a study of the reception of Gramsci in Argentina, of which Aricó and his colleagues from *Pasado y Presente* had been promoters, while Portantiero and Nun's book is a compilation of essays about the Argentine democratic transition.<sup>115</sup> Both these works became seminal works in their respective fields.

In the years 1987 and 1988 the CCS was at its best. Talks, seminars, workshops and conferences were taking place every week in the building on Bartolomé Mitre street, where the club was located. These talks and seminars covered diverse topics, from union movements in Argentina, to education policies, Peronism, popular cultural,

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<sup>113</sup> Ludolfo Paramio, 'Tras el diluvio. Introducción al postmarxismo', *Punto de Vista*, no. 30 (July-October 1987), 35-44.

<sup>114</sup> These seminars are documented in Sarlo's notebook and were also advertised in the pages of *La Ciudad Futura*.

<sup>115</sup> José Aricó, *La cola del diablo: Itinerario de Gramsci en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Puntosur, 1988), p. 11. *Ensayos sobre la transición democrática*, ed. by Nun and Portantiero.

environmentalism, the economic history of Argentina, and social movements in Latin America. The members even designed a project to found a socialist university, which was never realized.<sup>116</sup> However, the CCS certainly became a sort of educational institution marked by a socialist perspective, hosting activities on a daily basis.

By this time, the CCS had also established a steady dynamic: every year its members – which in 1987 totalled seventy – elected an executive committee and a president.<sup>117</sup> The committee subsequently planned all the activities for the year, while another group of people was in charge of administrative and financial duties. The CCS was mainly funded by its members, who would pay a monthly fee, but other sources of income were the workshops' fees and sponsorships from institutions, such as the Friedrich Eber Foundation, mentioned above.<sup>118</sup>

In another important respect, the CCS was also related to a number of magazines, which, for example, advertised its workshops in their pages, such as *Punto de Vista*, *Debates*, and *La Ciudad Futura*. *Debates* belonged to the Centro de Estudios de Estado y Sociedad (CEDES), an organisation closely connected with centres of studies in the US and Latin America (the CEDES' committee is until today largely comprised of scholars from US Universities).<sup>119</sup> This magazine was directed by Jorge Balán and its staff was comprised of intellectuals such as Sarlo and Aricó. The other magazine, *La Ciudad Futura*, was a publication entirely associated with the CCS. Published between 1986 and 2004 (with an interruption between 1998 and 2001) and originally directed by José Aricó, Juan Carlos Portantiero and Jorge Tula, *La Ciudad Futura* had been Aricó's magazine project since he was in Mexico.<sup>120</sup> The magazine was published every four months and its

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<sup>116</sup> Sarlo, Personal Notebook.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Alberto Díaz (Buenos Aires, 5 May 2017).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> See CEDES, 'Consejo Académico', <<http://www.cedes.org/institucional/consejo-academico.php>> [accessed 10 May 2018].

<sup>120</sup> In Aricó's archive in the University of Córdoba there is a sample of a cover of a magazine called *La Ciudad Futura* that suggests that he was going to publish it in Mexico in 1982. Aricó set aside the project until he returned to Argentina. Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Biblioteca María Aricó, Archivo José María Aricó, Documentos, Caja 9, Folio 2.4. There is also Sarlo's testimony about Aricó's project: 'Pancho Aricó llegó a *Punto de Vista* con la idea de hacer *La Ciudad Futura*, o de transformar *Punto de Vista* en *La Ciudad Futura*, pero no lo iba a poder hacer, porque yo no tenía esa idea de revista.' García and Mercader, 'Tozuda modernidad: entrevista a Beatriz Sarlo'.



articles were usually related to the discussions held in the CCS's meetings. Thus, *La Ciudad Futura*'s articles tackled questions such as socialism and democracy, intellectual reflections on the Latin American left, the revision of Marxism, and assessments of Alfonsín's government. In many aspects, *La Ciudad Futura* was a continuation of *Controversia* as its articles mostly revolved around questions of political theory and the analysis of the Argentine political context. Unlike *Punto de Vista*, in which topics such as Argentine culture, literature, psychology or cinema occupied a privileged space, *La Ciudad Futura* focused on issues of political theory, sociology and politics in general.

With respect to the relation between the CCS and political parties, the Club was completely autonomous from any state institution or partisan political affiliation. However, some people often considered the Club *alfonsinista*. The characterisation is explained by the similar stances set forth by the Radical government and the intellectuals in the CCS, which in broad terms can be identified with social democracy. Other areas of the Argentine intelligentsia would consider the experience of the CCS with scepticism and distance. For example, according to Adrián Gorelik, at that time a young architect who attended seminars conducted by Beatriz Sarlo in the CCS, 'el Club de Cultura Socialista se proclamaba muy pluralista, pero al mismo tiempo todos sus integrantes compartían una línea muy clara que era una identificación socialdemócrata.'<sup>121</sup> Gorelik would eventually withdraw his criticism towards this generation, especially when engaging more closely with *Punto de Vista*, as he became co-director of the magazine in 1991. However, according to Gorelik, who had participated in Trotskyist movements in the early 1980s as a student activist, the social democratic stance of the Club was not very attractive for him in the early 1980s.

Some years younger than the CCS founders and aligned with hard-line Marxism was Horacio Tarcus, one of the editors of the far-left magazine *Praxis*, who similarly considered the CCS as space of reunion for people with a similar background:

Siempre lo vi como la unión entre los que se fueron y los que se quedaron, y que habían entretejido una trama político intelectual personal social amistosa, y a su vez esa trama estaba sobredeterminada por un balance de lo que fueron

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<sup>121</sup> Interview with Adrián Gorelik (Buenos Aires, 24 August 2015).

los sesentas y setentas y que yo no compartía y que me parece que buena parte de mi generación tampoco.<sup>122</sup>

Tarcus' characterisation describes the union of two groups that had built an intellectual relationship not only based on political visions but also on a personal friendship. The quote also tells us much about the way in which intellectual identities were shaped: there is a differentiation stressed by Tarcus not only in terms of opposite political opinions, but also in generational terms. Friendships, political affinities and shared experiences seemed to have converged in this group of intellectuals who saw in the democratic transition an opportunity to move from the margins to the centre of public debate. What Tarcus also suggests about the balance put forward by members of the CCS is explained by the revision of Marxism that the members of the CCS undertook in the transition. As I will examine in the next chapter, the reconsideration of the ideology and political positions this group had held prior to 1976 will be one of the main axes of debates for this generation.

The appreciation of the CCS as *alfonsinista* was not, therefore, completely mistaken. Not only had these intellectuals endorsed Alfonsín's candidacy and proclaimed ideological stances that had much in common with *alfonsinismo*, but in addition, three visible members of the Club – Juan Carlos Portantiero, Emilio de Ípola, and Sergio Bufano – helped with the writing of Alfonsín's speeches through membership of the Grupo Esmeralda.<sup>123</sup> This group, comprised of experts in political theory, used to meet Alfonsín every week in the Presidential house in Olivos, to plan the President's speeches. The most important of them, and often remembered as one of the main political speeches in Argentina's contemporary history, was the *Discurso de Parque Norte*. The speech was delivered by Alfonsín to the Radical Party's national committee in December 1985. It was structured around the notion of modernisation, as it proposed not only an economic modernisation but also the establishment of a modern democracy with modern institutions. The speech set the guidelines for the government's ideological programme in

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<sup>122</sup> Interview with Horacio Tarcus (Buenos Aires, 7 September 2015).

<sup>123</sup> For a detailed account of the Grupo Esmeralda's development also see Josefina Elizalde, 'La participación política de los intelectuales durante la transición democrática: el Grupo Esmeralda y el Presidente Alfonsín', *Temas de historia argentina y americana*, no. 15 (2009), pp. 53-87. See also Aboy Carlés, 'Parque Norte o la doble ruptura alfonsinista'.

a manner that resembled a political theory or treaty, rather than a government agenda, and it significantly expressed the political views discussed in the CCS, as expressed in some of its fragments:

Frente al fracaso y al estancamiento venimos a proponer hoy el camino de la modernización. Pero no lo queremos transitar sacrificando los valores permanentes de la ética. Afirmaremos que sólo la democracia hace posible la conjugación de ambas exigencias. [...] Combinar la dimensión de la modernización en el reclamo ético, dentro del proceso de construcción de una democracia estable, implica la articulación de una serie de valores que redefinen en su interacción, puesto que la modernización es calificada por sus contenidos éticos y la ética lo es por el proceso de modernización.<sup>124</sup>

Modernisation and ethics were here considered two sides of the same coin, possible only within the framework of a stable democracy, which was presented as the all-encompassing solution for Argentina's problems.

An underlying assumption of this diagnosis was that the country's inability to reach satisfactory levels of modernity after the 1920s could be explained by the absence of a stable democracy throughout the period 1930-1983, in which six military coups overthrew different constitutional presidents. The reasoning behind this assumption was that, if democracy were consolidated, the country would inevitably enter a phase of modernisation. Concerning the ethical side of the coin, the problem of values referred to the importance given to social justice in the official discourse, another central idea in Alfonsín's speeches. In other words, Alfonsín, and those who were in charge of writing his speech, had in mind a social democratic project that would combine the ethical values of socialism, according to which social and political equality was a central issue, with the values traditionally promoted by political liberalism: that of individual liberties, Human Rights, freedom of speech and anti-authoritarianism.<sup>125</sup>

For CCS's members, there was no conflict between the participation of some

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<sup>124</sup> Raúl Ricardo Alfonsín, *Discurso de Parque Norte*, Available in <<http://constitucionweb.blogspot.com.es/2010/03/discurso-de-parque-norte-convocatoria.html>> [accessed 30 January 2018].

<sup>125</sup> Halperín Donghi provides a synthetic explanation of Alfonsín's strategy: 'Por otra parte [Alfonsín] intentaba traducir el idiolecto político peronista al lenguaje universal de la socialdemocracia, cuando el estado de bienestar al que esa socialdemocracia había ofrecido el más directo correlato político estaba entrando en crisis en todas partes, y con particular gravedad en la Argentina.' Halperín Donghi, *La larga agonía de la Argentina peronista*, pp. 118-9.

members in Alfonsín's government and the political openness of the club. However, those who participated in the Grupo Esmeralda were not allowed to occupy the presidency of the club.<sup>126</sup> Nor was there a conflict, either, between Alfonsín and his advisors. De Ípola, Portantiero and Bufano, for example, opposed the Due Obedience and Full Stop laws while being members of the Grupo Esmeralda. Both Bufano and de Ípola remembered Alfonsín as a man who respected their political opinions and welcomed, or at least allowed, dissension within his cabinet.<sup>127</sup> In *Radical Evil on Trial*, Nino offers the same view of Alfonsín, as he tells the following anecdote about the moment when the Full Stop law was sent to Congress:

On that very day, President Alfonsín sent the Full Stop law to Congress. I attended a large meeting in Olivos to discuss the draft proposal. Troccoli and Dante Caputo defended it. I thought that the Full Stop law was politically counterproductive. Later, I gave Alfonsín a letter, clearly stating my objections, while asking for a leave to teach at Yale Law School. He put the letter in his pocket, hugged me while saying, 'Let me try', and wished me good luck at Yale.<sup>128</sup>

Nonetheless, as the radical government began to suffer the first setbacks towards 1987 and 1988, certain tensions within the CCS arose. The Due Obedience and Full Stop laws, although condemned by all members of the Club without exception, received uneven criticism by them. *Punto de Vista*'s members harshly criticised the radical government for proposing those laws, while some articles in *La Ciudad Futura* were less critical of Alfonsín's decisions, with the justification that the military menace was worse than the application of these two controversial laws.<sup>129</sup> This uneven criticism towards the government was evidence of subtle differences in the political standpoints of the members of the CCS.

While some of them were less critical of Alfonsín, others, who had nevertheless voted for him, did not feel that a Radical government could represent them at all. This discussion led to questions about the CCS's goals towards the late 1980s and early 1990s.

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<sup>126</sup> Mocca, p. 107.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with Sergio Bufano (Buenos Aires, 21 March 2017).

<sup>128</sup> Nino, p. 93.

<sup>129</sup> See, for example, Emilio de Ípola, 'Composición tema punto final', *La Ciudad Futura*, no. 4 (March 1987), 4.

Some members argued that it was necessary to participate more actively in politics, within the socialist sphere, while others did not feel the urgency to do so. According to members of the Club, such as Portantiero and the publishing editor Alberto Díaz, in this period Sarlo and Aricó argued recurrently over this topic, namely, the direction that the club had to adopt in terms of its political identity.<sup>130</sup> The CCS, however, continued with the organisation of intellectual activities, but it was losing steam.

In 1991, Pancho Aricó died, and the Club greatly suffered from his loss, as he was the person who provided cohesion among its members. The CCS continued with its normal functioning over the next couple of years, until 1993, when after a series of discussions which led to the resignation of Sarlo, Vezzetti and another member, Rafael Filippelli, who became closer to *Punto de Vista* as he frequently contributed to the magazine with articles on cinema. He also started a relationship with Sarlo upon his return to Argentina from Mexico in the early 1980s, and remains her partner until today. This was, to a great extent, the end of the alliance that *Punto de Vista* and *Controversia* had first constituted more than ten years before. Although the CCS continued to exist until 2008, the year 1993 represented the end of an era for the intellectuals who, in 1983, believed that it was their time to contribute to the nation's reconstruction.

### Conclusion

It is possible to characterise the ten years that followed the democratic transition of 1983 as the transition from a moment of sheer optimism to a moment of crisis, in 1993, with respect to the hopes that had emerged ten years before. The democratic restoration brought about many important changes in Argentine society and culture, paving the way for the emergence of new cultural expressions, institutions, magazines, and, all in all, a cultural openness that contrasted greatly with the period 1976-1982. The generation of intellectuals who gathered around *Punto de Vista* accompanied that process, believing that it was their time to recover some prominence within the public sphere.

Moreover, the initial years of Alfonsín's presidency were completely in tune with

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with Alberto Díaz (Buenos Aires, 5 May 2017). See also Mocca, p. 108.

the expectations of these intellectuals in relation to the possibility of a centre-left government that, while respecting very carefully the rule of law, would also be socially progressive. However, the economy did not bolster the process as much as might have been hoped, and the government's legitimacy was progressively eroded by economic problems and pressures from the military. A similar shift can be described for the CCS: While its members created the Club with the expectation of building a new form of socialism in Argentina, they later had to lower their expectations and kept it as a space for social and intellectual discussion. Throughout these years, *Punto de Vista* published seventeen more issues, in which, again, it is possible to identify a period of optimism from 1983 to 1987, and a sense of crisis in the years that follow. The next chapters will analyse these two periods which complete the political and ideological sways experienced by this generation of intellectuals by focusing on the specific debates taking place in the pages of the magazine.

## Chapter 5: Past, Present, and Future (1983-1987). Issues 20-30

Entonces, sí, el proceso seguido a los ex comandantes constituirá una experiencia potencialmente transformadora, el surgimiento de un acto colectivo capaz, propiamente, de *reescribir la historia*. Y no se tratará solamente de la historia de la dictadura militar, sino, más ampliamente, de la oportunidad de evocar y reflexionar todas las impunidades y todos los totalitarismos. En ese sentido, más que descubrir una verdad, hará posible *realizarla* fundando una nueva síntesis presente del pasado.<sup>1</sup>

As was the case with many aspects of public life in Argentina, *Punto de Vista* inaugurated a new period during the democratic transition. If the magazine had gone through a first transformation in 1981, when censorship decreased and the military government began its decline, in 1983 the magazine would renovate itself one more time.<sup>2</sup> Given the dramatic political, social, and cultural transformations taking place in Argentina, it was necessary to recalibrate the review and adapt it to the new intellectual climate of the times. In Sarlo's account of the transition to democracy in relation to the magazine, the editors had to redefine *Punto de Vista*:

Y ahí empieza un momento muy difícil de la revista, por varias razones. En principio porque esa revista había constituido su identidad siendo una revista contra la dictadura, eso lo sabíamos hacer automáticamente. Cómo elegir las cosas, qué traducir, qué mostrar, es ahí donde producimos toda la modernización teórica: Raymond Williams, Hoggart, Bourdieu. Pero cuando las cosas empiezan a ampliarse a partir de fines del 81, 82, cuando llegan del exilio, había que adaptarse a otra cosa. O cerrar la revista y decir 'esta revista funcionó porque fue una revista contra la dictadura', como cerró *Controversia*, o seguirla. Sí, somos todos socialdemócratas, hemos sido todos marxistas. Pero ¿cuál es el proyecto de esta revista? Ese fue el momento en que nosotros dijimos '¿Qué revista tenemos que hacer?'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hugo Vezzetti, 'El juicio: un ritual de la memoria colectiva', *Punto de Vista*, no. 24 (August-October 1985), 3-5 (p. 5). (Italics in the original).

<sup>2</sup> Gustavo Vulcano considers the year 1983 a turning point in the magazine's history insofar as *Punto de Vista* began to incorporate debates about the recent past, while José Luis de Diego claims that this year marks the start of the magazine's 'sociologización', referring to an increase of sociological debates about the transition to democracy, socialism and the revision of Marxism. Vulcano, p. 7. De Diego, ¿Quién de nosotros escribirá el *Facundo*?, p. 149. Both claims are compatible and correct, although I would argue that both the 'sociologización' and the debates about the recent past characterised, more specifically, the period from 1983 to 1987, after which the magazine would return to cultural analysis and incorporate new debates and interests.

<sup>3</sup> García and Mercader, 'Tozuda modernidad: entrevista a Beatriz Sarlo'.

It was necessary to adjust the editorial line to the new times, as a way of maintaining the dynamism of a publication that had already been recognised as a relevant player in the intellectual field. Thus, although *Punto de Vista* maintained its interest in areas of culture that had been extensively explored in the initial years – namely, the sociology of literature, cultural history, Argentine literature, and the history of ideas – new topics of interest emerged during this third period.

The crisis of the left, the definition of democracy, the revision of the tragic events of the 1976-1983 period, and the reconsideration of the role of intellectuals are the prevailing topics that defined this period. Furthermore, other new topics, such as popular culture, also deserved commentary in the pages of *Punto de Vista*. Additionally, the editorial board grew in number as two colleagues, Juan Carlos Portantiero and José Aricó, joined the staff in issue 20 (May 1984), while new contributors were incorporated, some of them younger than the founders. This chapter, thus, sets out to analyse the development of *Punto de Vista* during the transition to democracy, through the study of issues 20 to 30, which span the years from 1983 to 1987, a period that can be characterised, as I suggested in the previous chapter, by the optimism of intellectuals.

The most readily visible aspect of the review's transformation was a change in format: the magazine became bigger, in number of pages and in size, and the covers were now printed on hard and coloured paper, while the logo and the diagramming, characterised by a rationalist and minimalist style, were retained. The magazine also maintained its previous criteria for the selection of illustrations. The pages contained illustrations in black and white by, in the majority of the cases, Argentine artists, as had been the case for the first twenty issues. Some of these artists, such as Luis Felipe Noé and León Ferrari, had taken their first steps in the Di Tella Institute and were now well-established figures in the Argentine visual arts scene. Their drawings in issues 24 and 26 are some of the best examples of the magazine's aesthetic quality from this period. Other artists, such as Guillermo Kuitca, Luis Pereyra, and Ana Eckell were beginning their careers (with a considerable degree of success) in the 1980s, and later became known as the generation of the 'new image', which was representative of the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Their drawings

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<sup>4</sup> See Jorge Glusberg, *Del pop-art a la nueva imagen* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone, 1985).



appeared in issues 23, 28 and 29, respectively.

Additionally, between issues 27 and 32 *Punto de Vista* incorporated a section called 'separata', containing long articles, which made the magazine significantly bulkier. The articles in the separata section focused on diverse topics and were authored by intellectuals from Europe, with the exception of the separatas in issues 28 and 30, which contained articles by the Uruguayan Carlos Real de Azúa and the Palestinian Edward Said, respectively. The first separata was published in issue 27 (August 1986) and it was a translation of an interview with Jürgen Habermas by Terry Eagleton, originally published in *New Left Review*.<sup>5</sup> This interview revolved around topics that had been essential for the Punto de Vista group, such as the discussion about structuralism and post-structuralism, the crisis of modernity, the crisis of Marxism, and democracy in contemporary societies. Habermas provided valuable insight into the changes experienced throughout the twentieth century, as well as an interpretation of the new the post-cold war order. The inclusion of this interview with Habermas anticipated the influence of the German philosopher on the Punto de Vista group, as his works would be frequently referenced in the pages of the magazine throughout the 1980s.

Other foreign influences were also showcased in the separatas, such as the works of Andreas Huyssen, Carl Schorkse, and Cornelius Castoriadis. Schorkse, in particular, exerted a great influence on Sarlo, for whom Schorkse's *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, along with Marshall Berman's *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, offered the main theoretical bedrock for her 1985 book *Una modernidad periférica* (see Chapter 4). Apart from the separatas, issue 29 (April-June 1987) included a detailed commentary on the discussions held by Perry Anderson and Edward Thompson about Post-Marxism in the early 1980s, written by José Sazbón.<sup>6</sup>

The inclusion in the pages of the magazine of debates taking place in Europe and the United States defined what could be called *Punto de Vista's* cosmopolitanism. Although national culture would continue to be a topic of main interest for the editors, as

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<sup>5</sup> The original article is Jürgen Habermas, 'A Philosophico-Political Profile', *New Left Review*, no. 151 (May-June 1985), 75-105.

<sup>6</sup> José Sazbón, 'Dos caras del marxismo inglés. El intercambio Thompson-Anderson', *Punto de Vista*, no. 29 (April-July 1987), 11-29.

articles on national literature, art and culture in general were common in this period, the magazine also maintained its interest in incorporating foreign influences. This would lead some intellectuals aligned with a nationalist-leaning stance to oppose the cosmopolitanism of *Punto de Vista*. For instance, Horacio González, editor of *Unidos*, would argue that *Punto de Vista* was a magazine ‘que se basaba en Raymond Williams, en E. P. Thompson, en Roland Barthes y nosotros seguíamos con la idea de que había con una variable nacional de la cual partir.’<sup>7</sup> However, it would certainly be unfair to define *Punto de Vista* in such terms, insofar as the interest in national culture, history, and politics largely defined the magazine’s editorial line, as I will examine in this chapter.

On a different note, during this period the magazine consolidated a stable readership and maintained subscriptions abroad, as exporting *Punto de Vista* to other countries was considered a central goal by its editors. In the 1990s, for example, when the economic situation in Argentina made it significantly expensive to mail magazines abroad, *Punto de Vista* paid the price difference in order to maintain these subscriptions. In Sarlo’s account:

Prácticamente trabajábamos en los quioscos para pagar las suscripciones de las bibliotecas norteamericanas [...]. Primero porque además hace a la difusión tener una revista en las bibliotecas norteamericanas, te leen todos los estudiantes. Y segundo porque una revista que tiene que estar, una revista que no está en bibliotecas, es una revista de barrio.<sup>8</sup>

If the magazine had only been a part of the cultural resistance under the dictatorship years – its readership consisted of a ‘puñado de lectores-colaboradores’, as the editorial in issue 30 expressed – now *Punto de Vista* was establishing its position as a magazine of reference in Argentina’s intellectual field and sales reached 1300 copies.<sup>9</sup>

The new positioning of *Punto de Vista* in the intellectual field also attracted additional regular contributors, such as Pablo Vila, who wrote a number of insightful articles about rock music, tango and folklore, and Elizabeth Jelin, who co-authored along with Pablo Vila an article in which they analysed the relationship established between

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Horacio González (London, 4 October 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Beatriz Sarlo (Buenos Aires, 15 August 2012).

<sup>9</sup> *Punto de Vista*, ‘Editorial. Décimo año’, pp. 1-2. The sales figures come from an interview with Beatriz Sarlo (Buenos Aires, 6 March 2017).

popular social sectors and democracy.<sup>10</sup> Some other new contributors represented a sort of generational renovation, as many of them were younger than the editors. This was the case of Graciela Montaldo, Delfina Muschietti, or Sergio Chejfec, well-established academics nowadays who belong to a younger generation than the *Punto de Vista* group. Many of them had been students at the workshops delivered by Sarlo during the dictatorship (see Chapter 3), and since 1983, they frequently wrote book reviews and articles for *Punto de Vista*.

The generational gap between this group of young intellectuals and the *Punto de Vista* group was made explicit in the pages of the magazine through the publication in issue 23 (April 1985) of an article by Lucas Rubinich, also younger than the magazine's founding group. His essay, entitled 'Retrato de una generación ausente', lamented the lack of an intellectual bond amongst his peers and mourned the intellectual fatherlessness of his generation. The text was nostalgic for a past Rubinich had not lived; especially when he recalled the cultural climate of the 1960s:

No tenemos ni la euforia de esos años de la revolución cubana, ni el psicoanálisis, ni la sociología como elementos novedosos dentro del campo intelectual, no escribimos al amparo de la luz de Sartre, ni 'descubrimos' a Cortázar.<sup>11</sup>

This nostalgic viewpoint was similar to Daniel Link's claim that his generation had not experienced the times of the Di Tella (see Chapter 1). However, Rubinich regarded the *Punto de Vista* group as 'elder brothers and sisters' ('hermanos mayores'), who had introduced him and his colleagues to the precarious intellectual field of the dictatorship through semi-clandestine workshops and magazines. In short, Rubinich mourned the lack of identity and cohesion of his generation in contrast to his elders, who, in turn, had maintained intellectual bonds and had also experienced the thriving 1960s. Rubinich's article tells much about how the generation of people gathered around *Punto de Vista* was perceived as a cohesive – and we may add, mature – intellectual cohort. However,

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<sup>10</sup> Pablo Vila, 'Peronismo y folklore: ¿un réquiem para el tango?', *Punto de Vista*, no. 26 (April 1986), 45-48. Pablo Vila, 'El rock. Música argentina contemporánea', *Punto de Vista*, no. 30 (July-October 1987), 23-29. Elizabeth Jelin and Pablo Vila, 'Cotidianidad y política', *Punto de Vista*, no. 29 (April-July 1987), 27-32.

<sup>11</sup> Lucas Rubinich, 'Retrato de una generación ausente', *Punto de Vista*, no. 23 (April 1985), 44-46 (p. 44).

Rubinich's mourning tone was challenged by some of his peers and *Punto de Vista* 25 (December 1985) included a response to Rubinich's article. This new article was less pessimistic about the place that this new generation, those who were around thirty years-old in the mid-1980s, could occupy in the intellectual field and suggested them not to fall into nostalgic viewpoints about 'un tiempo que pudo ser y no fue'.<sup>12</sup> The inclusion of the discussion sparked by Rubinich's article in the magazine seemed to confirm that initial perception of *Punto de Vista*'s editors as a cohesive group of intellectuals, for Rubinich, but also his respondents, saw their elders as a consolidated intellectual cohort. Moreover, they were now recognised by a younger generation as mentors and intellectual models, and as a group from which the new generation had to distance itself.

Given the new position adopted by *Punto de Vista* and its members in the local intellectual field, the publication became, to quote Roxana Patiño, the hegemonic magazine of the transition.<sup>13</sup> Not only had the magazine been exploring, already since its initial years, topics that were fundamental in the democratic transition, such as Argentine cultural history, or, simply, Argentine history, but the review also successfully adapted to the new context of 1983, incorporating new topics, new theories, new contributors, and, above all, articulating a reflection on the past and a re-definition of the political and intellectual stances that had dominated the cultural field for many years. Apart from the novelties described in this chapter's initial pages, *Punto de Vista* displayed three main strands during the period 1983-1987, which can be analysed as follows: an extended reflection on the crisis of the political left and the articulation of a new political ideology; the matter of memory in the post dictatorship period; and a revaluation of the role of intellectuals in society. The following pages will analyse these strands in detail, as they can be seen as the main contribution of *Punto de Vista* to discussions that were crucial for Argentine culture during the democratic transition and beyond.

### The crisis of the left

It was during this period that *Punto de Vista* dedicated its main articles to the crisis of the

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<sup>12</sup> Nora Domínguez and others, 'Réplicas', *Punto de Vista*, no. 25 (December 1985), 45.

<sup>13</sup> Patiño, *Intelectuales en transición*, p. 23.

left. The covers of the three issues that followed the 1983 elections read ‘La izquierda: crisis de una cultura política’, ‘Imágenes de la izquierda. Historia y cultura’ and ‘Laicismo, democracia y socialismo’. These headlines showcased the urgency of intellectuals in redefining a left-wing political stance in the immediate aftermath of the dictatorship. This endeavour would mostly fall to intellectuals who returned from exile in Mexico, as Aricó, de Ípola, Portantiero and Terán all authored the central texts regarding the crisis of the left published in the magazine. José Nun, a prestigious Argentine social scientist who has studied democratisation processes, social movements and social marginalisation in Argentina and was Secretary of Culture during Néstor Kirchner’s government, also published a number of key articles in *Punto de Vista* during this period. As Cecilia Lesgart has shown in her study of the field of social sciences during the transition to democracy in Argentina, these left-wing intellectuals progressively detached themselves from a Marxism that was considered anachronistic, and put forward a socialist program that incorporated elements from political liberalism.<sup>14</sup>

Issue 20 is perhaps the most compact and coherent instalment regarding the re-definition of the left, so it will be analysed in detail in the following pages as an example of the strategy adopted by *Punto de Vista* in regards to this debate. The cover, in a striking yellow colour and with drawings by Carlos Boccardo that resembled the well-known sculptures of tortured people by Argentine artist Juan Carlos Distéfano, anticipated the authors in charge of the main articles: Portantiero, Nun, Sarlo, Terán and Pietro Ingrao.<sup>15</sup> Portantiero – who a year later co-edited with Nun *Ensayos sobre la transición democrática en la Argentina*, after which they became two of the most notable Latin American scholars specialising in democratic transitions – authored the opening article.

Portantiero’s text objected to the Marxist notion of ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, insofar as this political stage of the transition from capitalism to socialism lead to an ‘enlightened despotism’, which occluded political participation of civil society.

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<sup>14</sup> Lesgart, p. 149.

<sup>15</sup> Juan Carlos Distéfano is a prestigious Argentine sculptor born in 1933 who was head of graphic design in the Di Tella Institute. He is known for his works in acrylic that depict pain and suffering imprinted on human bodies. His famous sculpture ‘El mudo’, for example, depicts a man tied and drown in water, and it has been interpreted as a reference of torture methods applied by the military to its victims during the last Argentine dictatorship. See, for example, Jorge Glusberg, ‘El dolor desde el arte’, in *Juan Carlos Distéfano* [catalogue] (Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1998), pp. 11-16.

Portantiero instead suggested adopting the Gramscian idea of hegemony to replace the notion of dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Portantiero's article aimed to define a new kind of socialism, by incorporating new conceptions about democracy and pluralism, that intellectuals were to endorse during the transition. This text, entitled 'Socialismo y democracia. Una relación difícil', thus summarised the perspective of this new socialist project, which combined two key new features that, to some extent, addressed the failures of the socialist experiences of the twentieth century: a defence of hegemonic plurality and the importance given to formal democracy. According to the former, democracy is understood as a regime in which the required consensus of civilians does not necessarily erase differences and dissensions between them.<sup>17</sup> Here, Portantiero argued against the Gramscian idea of hegemony understood as organic hegemony, according to which 'la sociedad hecha Estado [...] premia a los valores de la integración personal y socio-cultural y construye una politicidad *total* que finalmente disuelve la vida activa de la sociedad civil.'<sup>18</sup> On the contrary, Portantiero supported the idea that civil society, in its complexity and differences, must be considered as a compound of particularities. This is what he called 'pluralist hegemony'.<sup>19</sup>

This leads to the second feature of his proposal, as plural hegemony is only possible within a democratic order, which brings forth a question about the difference between substantive democracy and formal democracy. According to the former, democracy can only be accomplished once a society reaches social and economic equality,

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<sup>16</sup> Juan Carlos Portantiero, 'Socialismo y democracia. Una relación difícil', *Punto de Vista*, no. 20 (May 1984), 1-5 (p. 4).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* (Italics in the original). Gramsci's notion of hegemony refers to the social and cultural battle for consent in societies. Gramsci's concept does not necessarily coincide with the common sociological use of the term hegemony as referring to the cultural, political or economic dominance of a particular State above others. In particular, Gramsci uses the idea of hegemony to refer to cultural and political struggles led by a specific group – for instance, the proletariat – to impose its political project – for instance, communism – within a society and not amongst different states. However, as George Hoare and Nathan Sperber show in their study of Gramsci's thought, the concept of hegemony should not be understood as a means but as an end of politics. Hegemony would be, therefore, the outcome of the process of construction through the power of attraction of the leading group. See George Hoare and Nathan Sperber, *An Introduction to Antonio Gramsci: His Life, Thought and Legacy* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), pp. 117-38. In his article, Portantiero objected a possible interpretation of Gramsci's hegemony as organic, in which pluralism would be occluded by the imposition of the worldview of the 'winning group', leading to the erasure of differences and plurality.

<sup>19</sup> Portantiero, 'Socialismo y democracia', p. 5.

while the latter stresses the idea that certain institutional mechanisms are required to preserve and enhance democracy.<sup>20</sup> For Portantiero, social equality was only possible within the frame of a solid and robust democratic structure. According to this viewpoint, certain principles that have traditionally characterised liberalism, such as the importance given to freedom of speech, freedom of religion, civil rights and gender equality, were to contribute to the new synthesis the author was putting forward. As Portantiero concluded, the new socialism had to take these principles of liberalism into account, as he claimed that: ‘parece también evidente que el socialismo no podría prescindir de la acumulación cultural y política que implican ciertas adquisiciones del liberalismo.’<sup>21</sup> Portantiero’s proposal was not to move to a different ideology: it was rather to re-define socialism through the incorporation of values from political liberalism heretofore dismissed by the Argentine left.

Less akin to the terminology of liberalism was José Nun’s article, entitled ‘La rebelión del coro’, in which he advocated for the rebellion of social groups associated with what he called ‘vida cotidiana’, namely social groups such as ethnic minorities, the elderly, the homeless, the disabled, the homosexuals, and most prominently, women.<sup>22</sup> Nun criticised in his text the reductionism of traditional Marxism, which defined all struggles in terms of class struggles. Instead, he proposed a socialist democracy built on everyday practices, which would give voice to the members of what he called ‘the choir’, namely, young people, women, the indigenous, or, in short, the underrepresented. Both Nun’s and Portantiero’s text stressed the idea of society as a plurality, and not, as traditional Marxism considers it, as divided between a bourgeoisie and a proletariat.

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<sup>20</sup> According to Portantiero, who provided a characterisation of these two types of democracy in a text published in *Controversia*, ‘La [democracia real] respondería a la pregunta acerca de *quién* ejerce desde el estado el poder soberano; la [democracia formal] acerca del *cómo*, cualquiera sea el titular de esa soberanía, ejerce ese poder. En esta contraposición la tradición socialista revolucionaria ha privilegiado, teóricamente y de hecho, el *quién* por sobre el *cómo*. A principios de siglo esa distinción cortaría en dos al movimiento socialista: de un lado, el reformismo parlamentarista; del otro, el revolucionarismo consejista.’ Juan Carlos Portantiero, ‘Los dilemas del socialismo’, *Controversia*, no. 9-10 (December 1980), 23-24 (p.23). (Italics in the original).

<sup>21</sup> Portantiero, ‘Socialismo y democracia’, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> ‘El símbolo por excelencia de esta rebelión es el movimiento de liberación femenino, justamente porque la mujer ha sido siempre el símbolo por excelencia de la vida cotidiana.’ José Nun, ‘La rebelión del coro’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 20 (May 1984), 6-11 (p. 6).

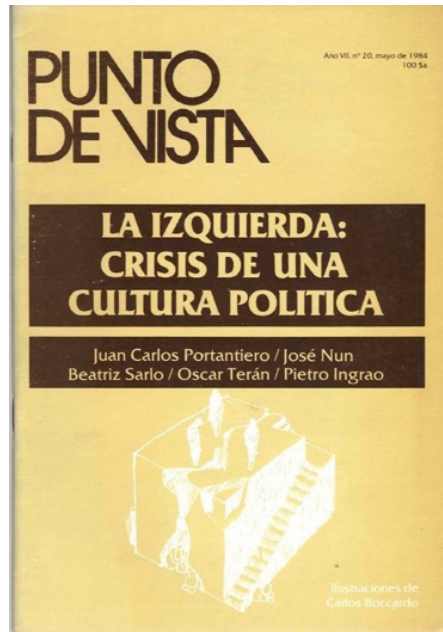


Figure 9. Cover of Punto de Vista 20 (1984).

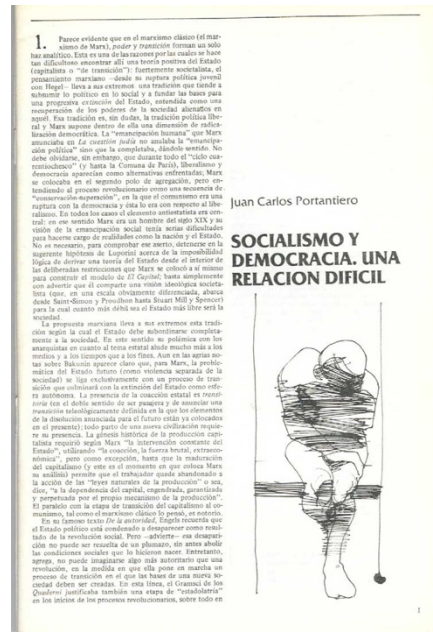


Figure 10. Punto de Vista 20 (1984), page 1. Article by Juan Carlos Portantiero and illustration by Carlos Boccardo

The third article, written by Pietro Ingrao, again underscored the valorisation of plurality against dichotomist schemas, as he argued against thinkers such as Carl Schmitt, who use the friend-enemy dichotomy in order to understand struggles and disputes within societies.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, Ingrao sustained that advanced capitalist societies are complex and polycentric, a feature that the friend-enemy dichotomy cannot accommodate, and that societies must be understood as a field of dispersion of power and plurality.<sup>24</sup>

In subsequent issues, new articles by the same authors would further develop this new conception of democracy endorsed by *Punto de Vista*. In issue 21 (August 1984), for

<sup>23</sup> Carl Schmitt was a conservative German jurist and political theorist. He is well-known for his definition of politics in terms of a friend and enemy distinction, set forth in his book from 1927, *The Concept of the Political*. As Meierhenrich and Simons argue in their study of Schmitt's political ideas, 'by declaring that the concept of the political revolves around the distinction between friend and enemy, Schmitt removed from consideration the alternative possibility that the political sphere could be inhabited by social agents whose actions are motivated by neither friendship nor enmity but by neutrality or indifference or yet other motivations.' Jens Meierhenrich and Oliver Simons, 'A Fanatic of Order in an Epoch of Confusing Turmoil: The Political, Legal, and Cultural Thought of Carl Schmitt', in *The Oxford Handbook of Carl Schmitt*, ed. by Jens Meierhenrich and Oliver Simons (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 4-70 (p. 21). The theorizations set forth in *Punto de Vista* during the years of the democratic transition were, therefore, at the antipodes of Schmitt's thought, insofar as the Punto de Vista group tried to put forward a view on democracy that made emphasis on the peaceful resolution of antagonisms.

<sup>24</sup> Pietro Ingrao, 'Contra la reducción de la política a guerra', *Punto de Vista*, no. 20 (May 1984), 12-18.



example, Portantiero and de Ípola published a key article entitled ‘Crisis social y pacto democrático’, which defined in detail the conception of democracy behind these assumptions. They stated there:

En una sociedad democrática debe haber reglas constitutivas (del sistema institucional) y reglas normativas (que son más contingentes, pero permitirían por ejemplo el reconocimiento de nuevos derechos, o sea, garantiza la movilidad y el cambio de reglas, reduciendo el autoritarismo). [...] El modelo de pacto aparece en el mundo moderno como el único esquema de referencia que permite conciliar la existencia de una pluralidad, potencialmente conflictiva, de sujetos sociales.<sup>25</sup>

Once again, these authors stressed the importance of constitutive rules within democracy that would ensure the preservation of plurality. Also Nun’s article in issue 22 (December 1984), ‘Democracia y socialismo: ¿etapas o niveles?’, espoused an anti-authoritarian conception of democracy in which different groups in society would struggle for democratisation within their own spheres of practice. His proposal was to consider democracy within the different spheres of society, rather than conceiving it as the final stage of the historical process. Familial relations, unions, and the workplace figured in this text as spaces in which democratisation was also necessary.<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to contrast these texts with the introduction of one of the key texts of post-Marxism worldwide, namely Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, published in 1985. In the introduction of this fundamental text, Laclau and Mouffe summarised certain political definitions that are related to the ideological stance adopted by the Punto de Vista group in these years. In the opening paragraphs of this important post-Marxist study,

communism as a transparent society from which antagonisms have disappeared.<sup>27</sup>

As in the case of *Punto de Vista*, Laclau and Mouffe set out to articulate a post-Marxist project more inclined to democratic values and critical of some earlier and dichotomist versions of Marxism, a stance suggested in the quotation. It is likely that they also influenced each other insofar as Laclau, for example, had been invited to the Club de Cultura Socialista (CCS), where the members of *Punto de Vista* and other intellectuals used to meet during the transition (see Chapter 4). This shows the extent to which intellectuals in Argentina were essaying post-Marxist theories (without necessarily using that category) and rethinking Marxism in similar terms to more widely-known post-Marxist philosophers.

However, other international theoretical currents of thought exerted great influence over the political thought of the Punto de Vista group. A close look at the footnotes in the articles mentioned above reveals much about the influence of European continental thought: Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, and the intellectuals from the *New Left Review* were cited in numerous articles during this period.<sup>28</sup> In issue 21, for example, Oscar Terán provided a brief overview of Michel Foucault's main philosophical tenets and defined the 'Foucauldian program' as a critique of modernity.<sup>29</sup> This article was, in the first place, a homage to the French philosopher in the year of his death, as Terán praised the 'carácter estimulante' of Foucault's thought and his ground-breaking viewpoints, especially in regards to the Marxist tradition, to which Foucault criticised from within.<sup>30</sup> In second place, Terán highlighted Foucault's critique of modernity in its

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<sup>27</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> To give only a few examples, Portantiero and de Ípola, in their article for issue 21, made extensive use of Habermas' theory of action and his theorisations on social integration, while they also cited Foucault – his theories about language and politics in particular – at length. See de Ípola and Juan Carlos Portantiero, 'Crisis social y pacto democrático'. Altamirano cited Foucault and his theories about the role of the intellectual in Carlos Altamirano, 'El intelectual en la represión y en la democracia', *Punto de Vista*, no. 28 (November 1986), 2-4. Hugo Vezzetti, in an article about love and sexuality, also cited Foucault's *History of Sexuality* as an obvious reference. See Hugo Vezzetti, 'Cultura y moral: el amor y la sexualidad en Occidente', *Punto de Vista*, no. 23 (April 1985), 26-28.

<sup>29</sup> Oscar Terán, 'Michel Foucault: una genealogía de la modernidad', *Punto de Vista*, no. 21 (August 1984), 21-22 (p. 21).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

consideration of plurality, as the French philosopher asserted that so-called ‘truth domains’ are multiple and not univocal. Foucault’s consideration of social sectors within capitalism other than the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, offered a new vision from which to analyse the Argentine context, as Terán suggested at the beginning of his text:

Se trata de evaluar algunos rasgos de este pensador de la diferencia desde una geografía donde el despotismo militar (pero no sólo) potenció la represión de esos ‘otros’ – homosexuales, feministas, pacifistas, locos o simplemente ‘jóvenes’ – que pueblan en medio de una mal disimulada hostilidad algunos espacios reconocidos de nuestra sociedad.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, in this homage, Terán interpreted Foucault’s thought under the light of the Argentine situation, and even more, it seemed that Foucault’s criticism against the French left, which Foucault considered inattentive of differences and plurality, served Terán’s purpose of criticising the Argentine far-left that opposed, for example, Alfonsín’s reformism during the transition.<sup>32</sup> Michel Foucault thus became a frequent reference for the Punto de Vista group in these years. Altamirano, for example, in a review of Jean-François Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* published in issue 25, claimed that Foucault was the most prominent intellectual in challenging the foundations of *grand récits* set forth by the three big theories of modernity: Enlightenment, Idealism and Marxism. This anti-modern stance represented by Foucault, Altamirano argued, was fuelled by the recovery of Freud, Nietzsche, and the influence of Wittgenstein and Heidegger, philosophers who had challenged the modern notion of the subject and the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> In *The Cambridge Introduction to Michel Foucault*, Lisa Downing analyses the relationship of Foucault with the French Communist Party, of which he was a member for a brief time, in order to explain Foucault’s view of Marxist thought. While Foucault supported left-wing movements, he rejected the dogmatic view of French communists, who, for example, did not accept homosexuality. However, Downing rightly warns the reader not to confuse Foucault’s relationship with Marxism with his critique of the French Communist Party. Foucault’s rejection of traditional Marxism stems from his conception of power relations as a disperse in a field of forces. In Downing’s words: ‘Foucault is concerned with specificity. Where Marx puts forward a system, Foucault seeks to demystify the working of systematisation. And – most significantly – where Marx locates power in the oppression of one group, the proletariat, who, via the raising of class consciousness, should be encouraged to throw off their shackles and aim for revolution, Foucault develops a model of power relations, a network or force field of influences which is never the unique preserve of the dominator over the dominated.’ Lisa Downing, *The Cambridge Introduction to Michel Foucault* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 4.

modern conception of history.<sup>33</sup> It was evident that the grand narratives of modernity had been discarded, and that what Terán called ‘pensamiento de la diferencia’, the idea of society as a compound of diverse people and diverse struggles, was dominating the theorisations of the moment. Fragmentation became a keyword, for now reality was considered a plurality and the modern idea of totality was rejected for its inability to explain difference. As Cecilia Lesgart claims, the efforts made by Argentine intellectuals to think through non-binary categories served the purpose of establishing a clear break with a past (including the dictatorship period) in which dichotomies – such as war-order, friend-enemy, oligarchy-the people, Peronism-Antiperonism – had dominated political debates.<sup>34</sup>

The way in which the Punto de Vista group adopted these new theories in vogue cannot be seen as an acritical appropriation, but rather as an original adaptation, shaped by the Argentine context and the intellectual background of the group. Firstly, the ‘pensamiento de la diferencia’, as Terán labelled Foucault’s theories, served the purpose of challenging the dictatorial discourse, which had been totalitarian and repressive of differences and the subversive. The idea of society as a plurality of interests vindicated ideas of tolerance and freedom against autocracies and totalitarianisms. Secondly, the challenges set against certain Marxist notions provided a platform from which to re-think previous Marxist dogmas that had utterly failed. If in the 1960s and 1970s these intellectuals believed that there was only one struggle worth fighting, that of the masses against capital, now struggles were fragmented and dispersed, with no immediately obvious order of importance. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, plurality was revalorised by Portantiero, Nun, Terán, and de Ípola, who believed that a plural hegemony was preferable to an organic hegemony. Moreover, as Lesgart has argued, the rejection of previous theoretical-political dogmas and the strong endorsement of plural democracy, espoused a new set of beliefs that shaped a new identity for leftist intellectuals and a project of moral and intellectual reform.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, this new set of beliefs entailed a

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<sup>33</sup> Carlos Altamirano, ‘Ideología y sensibilidad postmodernas’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 25 (December 1985), 20-23.

<sup>34</sup> Lesgart, p. 94.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

major shift in the conception of the role of the intellectual, insofar as the new conception of power as dispersed and the revalorisation of minorities and plurality entailed the idea that the intellectual had no pre-eminence with respect to other actors. Contrary to what many members of the Punto de Vista group believed in more revolutionary times, namely, that intellectuals had a pedagogical mission to accomplish in regards to the people, they now saw themselves as only one of many actors, while they also criticised their previous arrogance in relation to the masses.<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, the magazine held to the idea that intellectuals, and a magazine made by them, had to provide a global interpretation of society and history. The discussions published in this period are framed in this worldview, as it was necessary to put forward an interpretation of the past and a political programme for the future in a coherent manner. Issue 20 is the best example of this synthetic approach. This issue unveiled a cohesive and total interpretation of modern societies, rather than a fragmented narrative. What I argue is that although there was a shift in the conception of the intellectual, as now the intellectual addressed its peers and not the masses, *Punto de Vista* maintained the belief that the intellectual had to provide an articulated worldview with regard to politics and culture, a stance that was clearly conveyed in Sarlo's article about *Punto de Vista* published in 1999:

La revista sigue siendo lo que fue en un comienzo (y quizás sea este rasgo el que mantenga el hilo de su historia): una publicación de intelectuales destinada a un público intelectual que mantenga una mirada atenta tanto sobre literatura y el arte como sobre las ideologías y la política.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, although the articles by de Ípola, Nun, Portantiero, and Terán proclaimed that actors such as women and ethnic minorities had now to be taken into account, the magazine never published specific articles on any of these themes. For example, feminism did not garner any commentary throughout the entire period on which this research is focused, in spite of the fact that feminist theories were belatedly introduced in Argentina;

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<sup>36</sup> Some of the most important efforts to define a new role for intellectuals, one that conferred meaning to the intellectual task that would be humbler in respect to earlier conceptions are José Nun, 'La rebelión del coro'; Beatriz Sarlo, 'Intelectuales: ¿escisión o mimesis?', and Carlos Altamirano, 'El intelectual en la represión y en la democracia'.

<sup>37</sup> Sarlo, '*Punto de Vista*: una revista en dictadura y en democracia', p. 533.

in the mid-1980s, some intellectuals were already beginning to approach feminist currents of thought.<sup>38</sup> Debates about ethnic minorities or gender identities, for example, were also absent from the pages of the magazine. To find discussions about these topics during this period, one must look at magazines such as *El Porteño*, in which themes such as pornography, feminism, ethnic minorities, gender inequalities, rock music, and drugs were frequently analysed (see Chapter 4). In a certain regard, *Punto de Vista* maintained the idea that the intellectual still had to provide a total vision of the world, and ruminate on great problems, such as ideologies, politics, history or even the establishment of literary values.

### How to reconstruct the past?

In the opening article of *Punto de Vista* 21, Sarlo wrote that the only way of understanding the most recent period of Argentine history was in biographical terms, as she claimed that ‘Michelet escribió que había concebido la historia de Francia como su autobiografía. La historia de Argentina que hoy nos ocupa es casi imposible escribirla de otra manera.’<sup>39</sup> This reference to biography is explained by the fact that, although amongst the thousands of victims of military repression working class members represented the majority, the proportion of young middle class students that had suffered censorship, exile or death was exceptionally elevated.<sup>40</sup> Sarlo and her colleagues were part of the group of middle class students who had suffered political prosecution. The history of repression was consequently seen as their own history, and those who returned to public life as intellectuals felt particularly compelled to reconstruct and provide an interpretation of that

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<sup>38</sup> Diana Maffia, a prominent feminist philosopher in Argentina, has pointed out that already in the early 1980s she received the influences of feminist theories, as the feminist philosopher María Lugones was invited to deliver lectures in Argentina and books on feminism arrived in the country. Código y Frontera, ‘Entrevista a Diana Maffia. Filosofía de fronteras. Feminismo de intersecciones’, *Código y Frontera*, November 2016 <<http://www.codigoyfrontera.space/2016/11/04/filosofia-de-fronteras-feminismo-de-intersecciones/>> [Accessed 7 February 2018]. For an overview of the feminist movement in Argentina from the 1970s to the 2000s see also Marcela Neri, ‘Feminist Awakenings’, in *The Argentina Reader: History, Culture, and Politics*, ed. by Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 528-36.

<sup>39</sup> Sarlo, ‘Una alucinación dispersa en agonía’, p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> Halperín Donghi, ‘El presente transforma el pasado’, p. 71-72.

tragic past. They actively exercised what Elizabeth Jelin calls a labour of memory, defined as ‘debate and reflexivity about the past and its meaning for the present/future.’<sup>41</sup> For Jelin, the labours of memory can be exercised at a personal level, as well as in the public and political sphere, the latter involving ‘rethinking the relationship between memory and politics and between memory and justice.’<sup>42</sup> It can be argued that *Punto de Vista* put forward a labour of memory in which both levels, the personal and the collective/political, were intermingled.

It was during the first years of the democratic transition, between issues 20 and 30, that *Punto de Vista* actively tried to tackle the question of the past, in an attempt to provide a careful, distant, and articulate explanation of the tragedy of the dictatorship. There were two different horizons to consider. One was the immediate past, in which they and many others – including the exiled intellectuals, the dead and the disappeared – had been victims of terror, insofar as they had been part of the politically active groups that the military targeted. The dictatorship represented one of the cruellest and most tragic episodes of Argentine history and, as Hugo Vezzetti – who became *Punto de Vista*’s specialist in memory studies – described it in issue 24 (August-October 1985), ‘algo del orden del *trauma* debe ser reconstruido, rememorado y reflexionado.’<sup>43</sup> The second horizon of meaning was more problematic, as it referred to the early 1970s, in which, rather than victims they had been privileged agents of change. This perspective tended to offer a self-critique of the role played by intellectuals in the years prior to 1976, which was very explicit in Sarlo’s above-mentioned article, as she argued that ‘en la claridad de la revolución futura nos habíamos convertido en amos de la historia.’<sup>44</sup> In the view of the *Punto de Vista* group, it was crucial to return to that revolutionary past in a critical manner, reflecting on the errors and failures of their own political activism, a critical attitude very much aligned with the revision of the legacy of the left addressed above.

The first horizon of meaning in which memory was laboured, namely the fact that

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<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory* (University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Vezzetti, ‘El juicio: un ritual de la memoria colectiva’, p. 3. (Italics in the original). Vezzetti has also explored the problem regarding the study of collective memory in relation to the Argentine dictatorship in Vezzetti, *Pasado y Presente*.

<sup>44</sup> Sarlo, ‘Una alucinación dispersa en agonía’, p. 1.

they had been victims, had a significant consensus within both Argentine society and the intellectual field. There was a shared idea that history had to be reconstructed based on the victims' stories, replacing the discourse of the perpetrators with a narrative respectful of liberties, differences, justice and more importantly, truth.<sup>45</sup> In this context, the trials against the military juntas were presented in the pages of the magazine as the fundamental cornerstone of the labours of memory insofar as they disclosed the testimonies of the victims, unveiling the torture and assassination system implemented by the military.

As the trials were taking place, *Punto de Vista* dedicated the main articles in issue 24 to its analysis. Firstly, Altamirano's text 'Sobre el juicio a las juntas militares' stressed the role played by the trials in the acknowledgment of the past and the disclosure of the truth as an enlightening spectacle (he stated, for example, that 'aun para nosotros, los que estábamos enterados, el juicio resulta esclarecedor').<sup>46</sup> Described by Altamirano as the Argentine version of the Nuremberg trials, the trial against the juntas also offered a guarantee that the past was not going to be repeated. Setting aside the noticeable distance between the Nazi genocide and the Argentine dictatorship in terms of the number of victims and targeted social groups, the comparison has been commonly used as both these experiences represent the appearance of a previously unknown radical evil in these societies, which brought about an unprecedented dimension of horror and collective trauma.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the quote by Theodor Adorno that headed Altamirano's article, 'la exigencia de que Auschwitz no se repita es la primera de todas en la educación', was not

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<sup>45</sup> In *Pasado y Presente*, Vezzetti analyses the role played by the CONADEP and the publication of *Nunca Más* in the constitution of a consensus against the military discourse. He argues that this unveiling of the truth through the CONADEP and later by the trial against the juntas, was based on the victims' account of the crimes perpetrated by the military. In regards to the report of the CONADEP, Vezzetti argues that 'El Informe, una vez publicado, era a la vez una recopilación de pruebas para la intervención judicial y una narración que fijaba un *marco de verdad*. Ante todo, implantaba una significación global: esos crímenes formaban parte de un *plan sistemático* y comprometían al Estado. Lo más importante es que esa narración adoptaba el punto de vista de las víctimas; en un sentido básico, el eje, puede decirse, era el destino de los *desaparecidos*, es decir *qué* había pasado con ellos y *cómo* había pasado.' Vezzetti, *Pasado y Presente*, p. 117. (Italics in the original).

<sup>46</sup> Carlos Altamirano, 'Sobre el juicio a las juntas militares', *Punto de Vista*, no. 24 (August-October 1985), 1-2 (p. 1).

<sup>47</sup> Vezzetti has also suggested that the trial against the juntas was associated with experiences such as the Nazi genocide insofar as both had been, quoting Hanna Arendt, unprecedented 'administrated massacres'. Vezzetti, *Pasado y Presente*, p. 111. See also Nino's reference to Nazi Germany when describing the Argentine case in Nino, *Radical Evil on Trial*, pp. vii-viii.



entirely inappropriate to refer to the Argentine case.<sup>48</sup> On a different note, Altamirano's text highlighted the complicity with the military regime of certain groups, a dimension of memory that it was necessary to recover as well. '¿Por qué fueron tan pocos los que se opusieron y protestaron públicamente ante hechos tan reiterados y extendidos?' asked Altamirano rhetorically.<sup>49</sup> The question introduced the central argument of the text, according to which the trials against the military juntas were not a natural and obvious consequence of the post-dictatorship, but the result of the exceptional combination between the demands of Human Rights movements and the political willingness of the government in judging the military.

Vezzetti's text in this issue, which followed Altamirano's, also highlighted the role played by the trial, and is perhaps the most significant piece written in the pages of the magazine about the labours of memory. Vezzetti analysed the trials as a ritual of collective memory, sensitively describing the experience of the trials and stressing at the same time the ethical values promoted by them. He also underlined the formation of a public discourse, through the execution of the trials, the conformation of the CONADEP and the publication of *Nunca Más*, which was essential to the establishment of that collective memory. Ultimately, the trials were seen as the foundational event of Argentina's democracy, an interpretation that Vezzetti would further develop in his book *Pasado y Presente*.<sup>50</sup> One last feature of Vezzetti's analysis is the positive evaluation of the way in which the trials were carried out, for Vezzetti believed that the ascetic tone or melodrama-free development of the trials was a correct approach to memory, justice and truth. The neutral tone was seen as a fundamental component of the trials, because it expressed a moral option, as Sarlo had also claimed in an earlier issue:

Frente a *Nunca más* parece casi frívolo escribir la palabra 'estética'. Sin embargo, la narración del programa estaba pensada desde una estética que [...]

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<sup>48</sup> Vezzetti's article in issue 28 also established a comparison between Nazi Germany and Argentina as he quoted Hanna Arendt's questions in the *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: '¿Qué ha sucedido? ¿Por qué sucedió? ¿Cómo ha podido suceder?'. Vezzetti added that 'Estas mismas preguntas permanecen hoy, para nosotros, sin adecuada respuesta.' Hugo Vezzetti, 'Derechos humanos y psicoanálisis', *Punto de Vista*, no. 28 (November 1986), 5-8 (p. 6).

<sup>49</sup> Altamirano, 'Sobre el juicio a las juntas militares', p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Vezzetti argues in *Pasado y Presente* that the trials continued the work first carried out by the CONADEP, but that also provided a new dimension to the transition insofar as they staged a 'public ceremony', in a theatrical way, that contributed to the construction of memory. Vezzetti, *Pasado y Presente*, p. 136.

podría decirse que expresaba una opción moral. [...] [La] crispación estaba ausente en *Nunca más*. Los que nos contaban su proximidad con la muerte, habían renunciado a todo énfasis.<sup>51</sup>

The asceticism in the narration of the past was regarded in a positive light by *Punto de Vista*, as if the only possible way of referring to the tragic past was in a neutral tone, which ultimately reminds us of Adorno's famous statement that there is no poetry after Auschwitz.<sup>52</sup>



Figure 11. *Punto de Vista* 24 (1985), page 3. Article by Hugo Vezzetti and illustration by Luis Felipe Noé.

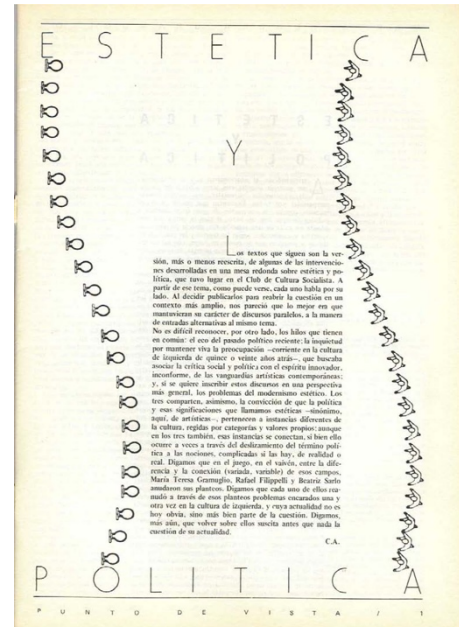


Figure 12. *Punto de Vista* 26 (1986), page 1. Introductory text to a series of articles about aesthetics and politics based on meetings organised by the Club de Cultura Socialista. Illustration by León Ferrari.

The question about how the memory of the past was shaped was seen as a fundamental discussion, and many articles which appeared in the pages of the magazine claimed that a main problem was not, simply, what to represent, but rather, how to represent the past. This is why films such as *La historia oficial* were harshly condemned by *Punto de Vista* for presenting a melodramatic, Hollywood-like narrative. This type of narrative, they argued, blocked a critical reflection about the past and, moreover, about history.

<sup>51</sup> Sarlo, 'Una alucinación dispersa en agonía', p. 2. Sarlo refers to a TV documentary based on the investigations carried out by CONADEP, which was broadcast in July 1984.

<sup>52</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Crítica cultural y sociedad* (Madrid: Sarpe, 1984), p. 248.

This latter problem takes us to the second horizon of meaning, referring to the responsibilities of the left in the increase in violence prior to the coup d'état. *Punto de Vista* strongly advocated a self-criticism that was not very common amongst leftist intellectuals, and which had been set forth firstly in *Controversia*. Héctor Schmucler declared in this magazine's first issue:

Era la voz de otras víctimas, la de militares y policías muertos, secuestrados, torturados, heridos, lisiados como consecuencia de la acción de los grupos guerrilleros [...] ¿Los derechos humanos son válidos para unos y no para otros?<sup>53</sup>

Schmucler's statement pointed out that there had also been violence from the left and that Human Rights violations during the 1970s were a problem that involved parts of society other than the military, in spite of the fact that the military engaged in greater and crueller criminal actions than those perpetrated by guerrillas. Indeed, violence had also been perpetrated by leftist militants in the years prior to the coup, and therefore the intellectuals who had been part of the so-called 'violencia revolucionaria' had to recover that past in order to provide a complete account of the historical past, which ultimately entailed a self-critique. In a statement in issue 21, Sarlo demanded the adoption of a self-reflective perspective as she urged her colleagues to take responsibility:

Nuestra autobiografía tiene un lugar abierto para nuestras responsabilidades: somos una parte de lo ocurrido en la Argentina, y haber sufrido más no es una razón para que en la reconstrucción del pasado nos olvidemos de nosotros.<sup>54</sup>

Such a critical stance on the actions carried out by the guerrilla groups, and by the left in general, was very problematic in the context of the trials. During the transition, the strategy adopted by the government was consistent with this viewpoint as it entailed the judgment of the guerrilla's leaders (mainly from Montoneros and ERP). However, Human Rights movements actively challenged this strategy, as they claimed that it was based on the so-called 'theory of the two demons' and that the violence exercised through the State and the violence exercised by small groups could not be equally judged.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, if

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<sup>53</sup> Héctor Schmucler, 'Actualidad de los derechos humanos', *Controversia*, no. 1 (October 1979), 3.

<sup>54</sup> Sarlo, 'Una alucinación dispersa en agonía', 2.

<sup>55</sup> For a critical view of the strategy set forth by the government in relation to guerrilla crimes, and the theory of the two demons see Emilio Crenzel, 'El prólogo del *Nunca Más* y la teoría de los dos demonios. Reflexiones sobre una representación de la violencia política en la Argentina', *Contenciosa*, no. 1 (second

the condemnation of the crimes committed by the military enjoyed a significant consensus – some far-rightist movements could still defend them but they were a minority – the revision of the left's behaviour was more problematic. On many occasions, still today, to highlight the responsibility of the left in the violence of the 1970s is interpreted as a position that weakens claims for justice in relation to the crimes perpetrated by the military.<sup>56</sup>

Nonetheless, the members of *Punto de Vista* believed that they were entitled to carry out that revision because they had suffered the repression themselves; hence, they felt they were in a position to challenge a certain epic vision of the past held by some of their peers. In effect, in some cases the sacrifice of the victims, their courage to face suffering and ultimately death, was seen by some members of the left as a heroic act, free from any excess or error. Sarlo pointed this out in the article quoted above, where she harshly condemned the position that writer Rodolfo Walsh had adopted before his disappearance in 1977. In her article, Sarlo criticised a letter Walsh had sent to his friends in 1976, on the occasion of his daughter's death. Victoria Walsh was 26 years old when detained by the military; she killed herself with a cyanide pill that she carried in her pocket, as many militants did at that time in case they were caught. In his notes, Walsh expressed pride for his daughter's struggle.<sup>57</sup> For Sarlo, such a discourse entailed an incomprehensible aesthetic:

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semester 2013). Crenzel objects the government's strategy and tends to consider Argentine society as a passive victim of the violence exercised by the State. For a contrasting point of view see Elizabeth Jelin, 'Militantes y combatientes en la historia de las memorias: silencios, denuncias y reivindicaciones', *Meridional Revista Chilena de Estudios Latinoamericanos*, no. 1 (October 2013), 77-97. For a general study of the report of the CONADEP published as *Nunca Más* and its role in the collective memory of the dictatorship see Crenzel, *La historia política del Nunca Más*.

<sup>56</sup> As an example of how vivid are the controversies around the number of victims of the dictatorship and about the responsibility of the left in the violence of the 1970s, the Minister of Culture of Buenos Aires Darío Lopérfido recently generated a polemic for his outspoken critiques against Montoneros and for claiming that the number of disappeared people in Argentina was 9000 and not 30,000, as most human rights movements claim. See Mariano de Vedia, 'Lopérfido habló de los desaparecidos y avivó una fuerte polémica', *La Nación*, 27 January 2016. < <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/1865657-loperfido-hablo-de-los-desaparecidos-y-avivo-una-fuerte-polemica> > [accessed 17 June 2018].

<sup>57</sup> In this letter, Walsh stated about her daughter: 'Su lúcida muerte es una síntesis de su corta, hermosa vida. No vivió para ella: vivió para otros, y esos otros son millones. Su muerte sí, su muerte fue gloriosamente suya, y en ese orgullo me afirmo y soy yo quien renace de ella.' Rodolfo Walsh, 'Carta a mis amigos'. Available in <[http://www.elhistoriador.com.ar/documentos/dictadura/rodolfo\\_walsh\\_y\\_la\\_muerte\\_de\\_su\\_hija\\_maria\\_victoria.php](http://www.elhistoriador.com.ar/documentos/dictadura/rodolfo_walsh_y_la_muerte_de_su_hija_maria_victoria.php)> [Accessed on 17 December 2016].

Nunca pude entender esta carta y durante mucho tiempo no pude hablar de ella. ¿Qué había querido hacer Walsh? Comunicar con el dolor tranquilo de quien ya estaba seguro de que había una bala en su propio final. Sí, pero también estetizar esa muerte. Su hija no sólo moría por la revolución a la cual ambos habían apostado, sino que moría bellamente.<sup>58</sup>

In Sarlo's view, Walsh was pushing the limits of reason to its ultimate negation. In Walsh's letter, to die for ideals was pictured as a heroic act, beyond the contextual factors of that death. Sarlo's critique of Walsh's letter condenses her rejection of the use of melodramatic aesthetics to refer to the past. Sarlo and her colleagues from *Punto de Vista* advocated, in turn, for the use of a 'cold' narrative that would recover history in a critical manner and would unveil the complexities and nuances of the past. This stance was in line with the criticism set forth by *Punto de Vista* towards some representations of the past in cinema and literature that privileged a language of family emotions over a historical perspective.<sup>59</sup> In summary, the Punto de Vista group conceived the labours of memory as the recovery of history: of the victims of repression, but also of the context in which those people had become victims. To recover history also entailed, in the view of *Punto de Vista*, to return to their own history in a critical manner, admitting the errors that the left had made in order not to romanticise a past that should not be repeated.

### The role of the intellectual

In the midst of the significant changes brought about by the democratic transition, intellectuals had no other option but to redefine their own space and role in society. They were no longer organically engaged with political parties as they had been before, which left them in a certain ideological fatherlessness, but they were also less constrained by fidelities to a specific and fixed set of ideas. On a different note, many of these groups had accumulated a considerable scholarship during the years of seclusion and had gained prestige within educated middle class sectors (the catacombs university was determining in this aspect, see Chapter 3), which enabled them to enter academic institutions after 1983, directly occupying senior positions. The latter situation was an advantage insofar

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<sup>58</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, 'Una alucinación dispersa en agonía', 3.

<sup>59</sup> See Vezzetti, *Pasado y Presente*, p. 120.

as they could now make a living out of their intellectual work, but it also entailed the risk of shutting themselves away in academia. If, prior to the dictatorship, the main threat had been, retrospectively, the total politicisation of intellectuals, during the post-dictatorship the main risk was the total specialisation of intellectuals.

For the Punto de Vista group it was crucial, in order to preserve their intellectual specificity, to maintain certain distance from both academic institutions and political parties. Although many of its members participated in politics and the majority of them held positions in universities, the magazine as such maintained its autonomy. The very few times the magazine received funding from institutions – the Spanish Pablo Iglesias Foundation, for example, partially funded issues 34 and 36 – it was made explicit on the issues' first pages. Otherwise, the magazine was always funded by sales and subscriptions. The insistence on economic autonomy exhibits a particular conception of the intellectual as independent from potential political or institutional constraints. In effect, alongside the revision of the past and the left – and ultimately related to both topics – *Punto de Vista* dedicated some of its most important articles during this period to defining a new role for intellectuals, which gave the magazine a particularly self-reflective character.

That new definition entailed, in the first place, the revision of the previous conception of the role of the intellectual, according to which intellectuals were at the vanguard of historical changes. The corollary of this earlier definition was that intellectuals had to get closer to the people and move away from a scientific specialisation that would only seclude them to an ivory tower, leading to a blurring of the line between the intellectual and the militant. Altamirano and Sarlo, whose articles during this period are the most significant ones in relation to the re-definition of the role of the intellectual, set out to revise and criticise their previous beliefs. Altamirano accused this previous stance of 'formulaciones ideológicas totalizadoras', and Sarlo claimed that intellectuals had ascribed to a 'narración mágica' according to which they had subordinated their intellectual identity to politics.<sup>60</sup>

To further understand this critique, it is worth quoting a few passages from Sarlo's widely-known article, 'Intelectuales, ¿escisión o mimesis?', published in issue 25. In her

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<sup>60</sup>Altamirano, 'El intelectual en la represión y en la democracia'. See also, Beatriz Sarlo, 'Intelectuales: ¿escisión o mimesis?', pp. 3-4.

text, Sarlo retrospectively traced the characteristic conception of the intellectual in the pre-dictatorship period:

Estaba, en primer lugar, la certidumbre de que el discurso de los intelectuales debía ser significativo para la sociedad y, especialmente, para los sectores populares. [...] El otro rasgo se relaciona con el interlocutor imaginario de los discursos de los intelectuales: el pueblo, el proletariado, la nación, el partido según líneas de fractura política y programáticas. Sin embargo, este proceso se vio acompañado por el cruce de la lógica intelectual con la lógica política y, finalmente, con la rendición de la lógica intelectual [...]. La política se convirtió en criterio de verdad y aseguró un fundamento único a todas las prácticas.<sup>61</sup>

Sarlo stressed the idea that intellectual specificity was displaced by political commitments, also described in this text as a ‘canibalización’ of intellectual discourse by politics. The ‘pueblo’, or alternatively, the masses, that ‘interlocutor imaginario’ as Sarlo called it, was seen as a main protagonist of history in the eyes of left-wing intellectuals. Hence, at the same time that intellectuals subordinated their work to the people’s liberation, they found concrete meaning in their work. Nevertheless, after the dictatorship – Sarlo acknowledged – these certainties fell apart and the scepticism derived from that loss of meaning became an existential threat to intellectual enterprise:

Quizás lo peor que pueda sucedernos sin embargo, es quedar petrificados en la contemplación de nuestro pasado ya sea bajo la forma del momento revolucionario derrotado o de la equivocación monstruosa de la cual nada puede extraerse. [...] Ambas perspectivas nos convierten en sujetos inexplicables y, al mismo tiempo, ocuyen la posibilidad de reconstruirnos como intelectuales públicos. [...] En esta era dominada por la temática del descentramiento del sujeto, estas notas parecerán extrañamente arcaicas frente a la *vague* cultural del postmodernismo. Y también parecerán culpablemente postmarxistas frente a un pensamiento de izquierda recalcitrante que, ante la inseguridad ideológica y política del presente [...] considera más reconfortante la idea de que nada ha cambiado lo suficiente ni en el mundo ni en la Argentina como para que las ideas recibidas deban ser sometidas a crítica.<sup>62</sup>

In this important passage, Sarlo positioned herself between a postmodernist view that would reject any possibility of transformation, and a leftist thought that rejects the revision of the past. She defended here the specificity of the intellectual task in the new context,

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<sup>61</sup> Sarlo, ‘Intelectuales: ¿escisión o mimesis?’, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 5. (Italics in the original).

insisting on the idea that intellectuals have a specific role to play in society, albeit a less committed relationship with the masses. As she has stated when asked about this specific article, she attempted to ‘rescatar el momento globalizador que los discursos intelectuales tenían en otros períodos.’<sup>63</sup> The idea of providing a global interpretation of reality remained an attribution of intellectual activity. In the last paragraphs, Sarlo proposed a new definition of the intellectual that she and her peers could identify with:

La academia nos va a hablar siempre de nuestra especificidad; quizás podamos encontrar en la sociedad algún discurso que nos hable de una figura más general y más pública, que no sea necesariamente la figura del político.<sup>64</sup>

Rather than providing a positive definition, Sarlo claimed that the intellectual must take distance both from academia and politics, in order to preserve the specificity of the intellectual enterprise. A similar description appeared a few issues later in Altamirano’s article, ‘El intelectual en la represión y en la democracia’, which was an account of the minimal expressions of dissent set forth by intellectuals in Argentina during the dictatorship, including *Punto de Vista*. Altamirano also claimed that, in the new democratic context, intellectuals had rightly abandoned their old ‘discursos totalizadores’, but that their critical vision and independence from politics and institutions had to be maintained: they had to preserve the right of asking ‘preguntas impertinentes’.<sup>65</sup>

Another dimension of the discussion about the role of intellectuals was concerned with popular culture. Intellectuals were no longer committed to the masses; however, a total disconnection with popular culture was seen as a sign of absolute elitism. For the *Punto de Vista* group there has always been a tension between cultural elitism – insofar as the magazine circulated amongst the intellectual elite – and popular culture. Although it would be inaccurate to consider the magazine popular, or addressed to a middle-brow public, *Punto de Vista* did place some interest in popular culture during this period. In this regard, Plotkin and González Leandri have suggested that *Punto de Vista* set forth the demystification of working classes and popular culture.<sup>66</sup> Such a strategy involved

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<sup>63</sup> Hora and Trimboli, ‘Beatriz Sarlo’ [Interview], p. 179.

<sup>64</sup> Sarlo, ‘Intelectuales: ¿escisión o mimesis?’, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> Altamirano, ‘El intelectual en la represión y en la democracia’, p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> Plotkin and González Leandri, p. 235.



challenging common interpretations, especially those set forth by Peronism, according to which there was a pre-eminence of popular culture in relation to elite culture. In other words, and to quote Roxana Patiño's analysis of *Punto de Vista*, the categories of the popular and of elite culture were in a constant tension and re-ordering during this period.<sup>67</sup>

I would argue that *Punto de Vista* set out to observe and analyse popular culture from a distance, as if there was a clear demarcation between the culture of intellectuals (and therefore, the culture of the *Punto de Vista* group) and popular culture. In this period, for example, articles on rock, tango, and folklore, were included in the pages of the magazine. However, these subjects were incorporated not because of the intrinsic value attached to them, but rather because they were manifestations of cultural changes, innovations, and historical shifts, phenomena which intellectuals had to explain and analyse from an articulate and reflective perspective.<sup>68</sup> In an interview in 2003, Hilda Sabato defined this stance adopted by the magazine in regards to popular culture: 'En el momento de la transición salieron algunos artículos vinculados a cultura popular, pero la visión o el recorte era la representación intelectual de esos procesos.'<sup>69</sup>

In regards to politics, another area of tension for intellectuals, *Punto de Vista* always articulated very explicit political stances on Argentine current events, mainly through editorials. While the group firmly opposed the military, they endorsed Alfonsín's government at first, and later criticised him when the Full Stop and Due Obedience laws were sanctioned. However, such a determination in offering its readers a political viewpoint was mainly encouraged by Sarlo, whereas the other members of the magazine were less keen on making political statements. Carlos Altamirano, for example, has stated that the adoption of political views about the events of the day was a source of discussion for the editors: 'la persona inclinada a sostener que *Punto de Vista* tiene que tener una posición sobre todo es Beatriz y la persona que no, soy yo.'<sup>70</sup> Thus, politics were also a

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<sup>67</sup> Patiño, *Intelectuales en transición*, p. 15.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, PEHESA, 'La cultura de los sectores populares: manipulación, inmanencia o creación histórica', *Punto de Vista*, no. 18 (August 1983), 11-14; Néstor García Canclini, '¿De qué hablamos cuando hablamos de lo popular?', *Punto de Vista*, no. 20 (May 1984), 26-31; Emilio de Ípola, 'El tango en sus márgenes', *Punto de Vista*, no. 25 (December 1985), 13-16; Pablo Vila, 'Peronismo y folklore, ¿un réquiem para el tango?'; Pablo Vila, 'El rock: música argentina contemporánea'.

<sup>69</sup> Daniel Link, 'Campo intelectual', *Radar, Página 12*, 21 December 2003.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

source of tension insofar as, although the editors of the magazine now maintained a distance from politics, some of them (especially Sarlo) believed that one important aspect of the role of the intellectual was to provide an analysis of political events.

In summary, *Punto de Vista* re-defined the role of intellectuals as what can be called public intellectuals. A definition given by Carlos Altamirano in 2013 might shed light on this mode of intellectual activity that differs from what he calls ‘prophetic discourses’:

El intelectual público no se concibe como un magistrado del espíritu ni como un experto, sino como un ciudadano que busca animar la discusión de su comunidad y que se rehúsa por igual tanto al consenso complaciente como a las simplificaciones, sea la del mesianismo político, sean las del discurso mediático. No toma la palabra en nombre del sentido de la historia, ni cree que sea imprescindible una teoría general para plantear su posición respecto de lo justo y de lo injusto [...]. El intelectual público suele valerse de su competencia en alguna disciplina, pero pretende una comunicación que no se limite a sus colegas ni al campo disciplinario al que pertenece. La democracia es su ambiente propicio.<sup>71</sup>

This definition articulates many of the features of *Punto de Vista*, a magazine made by experts who conceived the magazine as a vehicle to put forward their view about general themes that were not necessarily based on their academic disciplines. It was, also, a magazine addressed to a public that was wider than an academic readership, but smaller than that of mass media. The sole publication of this magazine, which was independent from political parties and free from institutional constraints, suggests that there was a place for this kind of voice, that of the public intellectual, in Argentina. However, towards the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s the crisis of values brought on by the new postmodern era did not chime well with the intellectual project of the magazine. Although *Punto de Vista* would be published for many more years, the end of the 1980s would bring about significant cultural, political and social changes that would lead the *Punto de Vista* group to re-think, one more time, their own role in society.

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<sup>71</sup> Altamirano, *Intelectuales*, p. 11.

## Conclusion

Between 1983 and 1987, *Punto de Vista* aimed to tackle urgent questions in the context of the transition. What has been differentiated here for analytic purposes – the rereading of the legacy of the left, the reconstruction of the past and the re-definition of the role of intellectuals – was intertwined in the texts published in the magazine, and sometimes one single article articulated many of these points. A dimension of the past affected the editors of the magazine personally: they had lost friends, had seen other friends leave Argentina, and had suffered exclusion from the public sphere. Moreover, they had suffered repression because of their previous political participation. When, finally, the terrorist state was ousted, that political past had to be redefined along with an identification they had never renounced: they had been and still were intellectuals. Even at the peak of their politicisation, they still assigned themselves an intellectual identity; and *Punto de Vista*, in spite of the changes experienced throughout its different periods, was always conceived as a magazine that belonged to the intellectual sphere.

However, the fact that the *Punto de Vista* group and their peers from Mexico occupied the centre of the intellectual scene during the 1980s is not only explained by the internal development of the group, but also by some contextual facts. Firstly, they found themselves in a solid position as experts in their respective fields, as they gained scholarship during the dark years; they were in their forties, so they were still young but experienced, and had accumulated a considerable amount of what Bourdieu calls symbolic capital within the intellectual elite. Some of them began to publish books in the early 1980s and although most of those who had stayed in Argentina did not hold doctorate degrees, they entered the University of Buenos Aires as senior scholars. Secondly, the connection established between *Punto de Vista* and *Controversia* was exceptional: the union of both groups brought together a considerable number of highly qualified intellectuals that shared a similar perspective about Argentina, gaining momentum for creating spaces of reflection, debate and production. To give a taste of how influential these intellectuals were in Argentina, it is worth quoting the account of a UBA student in those years:

Durante esos años, descubrí las transiciones hacia la democracia leyendo a Emilio de Ípola, a José Nun, a Juan Carlos Portantiero, a José Aricó a Marcelo

Cavarozzi, a Guillermo O'Donnell [...]. Las lecturas de los programas de estudio se centraban en los artículos de las revistas *La Ciudad Futura* o *Crítica y Utopía*. Por seguir, en el año 1992, un seminario proponía leer algunos clásicos del pensamiento político (Hobbes, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Locke, Schmitt) como si fueran contemporáneos y a algunos textos de intelectuales argentinos (de Ípola, Portantiero, Nun) como si fueran *libelles* de una época pasada o textos clásicos. La idea, más que original, revela cómo leíamos por aquellos años. A algunos pensadores contractualistas clásicos a través de las preguntas de Juan Carlos Portantiero. La lectura de Carl Schmitt pasaba obligadamente por un prólogo escrito por Aricó. La utilización y conceptualización de términos añejos, complicadamente teñidos de múltiples tradiciones teóricas [...] se ceñían a las interpelaciones que nos hacía el presente llamado democrático.<sup>72</sup>

More exceptional, perhaps, was the consonance between their renewed ideas about democracy and Alfonsín's figure, a politician particularly keen on intellectual thought, as the previous chapter explored. The close relationship Alfonsín established with intellectuals, such as Carlos Nino and the Grupo Esmeralda amongst others, show the extent to which intellectuals played an important role during the transition.<sup>73</sup> As Luis Roniger summarised it, intellectuals in the transition, those who had stayed in Argentina and those who were returning to it, 'aimed at transforming public spheres by shaping the political discourse and generating alternative projects to rethink Argentina's future.'<sup>74</sup>

The most paradigmatic manifestation of the influence of intellectuals on *alfonsinismo*, was the *Discurso de Parque Norte*, in which ideas of modernisation, political rights, pluralism and social justice were central. In one of the series of interviews Alfonsín gave to the journalist Pablo Giussani during his time in office, the President expressed his vision of social and political development in terms that highly resembled the concerns of the intellectuals grouped around *Punto de Vista* during the transition:

Una nación se construye a partir de elementos étnicos, políticos, sociales y culturales inicialmente dispersos e inconexos que en cierto momento se sienten convocados a integrarse en una gran empresa común. [...] Esto no significa que los distintos individuos y sectores compartan los mismos proyectos, las mismas valoraciones, las mismas concepciones sobre lo que es

<sup>72</sup> Lesgart, p. 16. (Italics in the original).

<sup>73</sup> Not only did the group of Carlos Nino and the Grupo Esmeralda advise Alfonsín during his presidency, other intellectuals who were affiliated with newly-born institutions or think tanks in Argentina, such as the Centro de Estudios de Estado y Sociedad (CEDES) and the Centro de Investigaciones sobre el Estado y la Administración (CISEA), were also close to the President. For an overview of the influence of these institutions see Lesgart, pp. 72-80. See also Roniger, pp. 142-45.

<sup>74</sup> Roniger, p. 146.

bueno para la vida individual y social. Que los individuos y sectores de nuestra sociedad, como los de todas las sociedades occidentales divergen en estos aspectos es un hecho: el hecho del pluralismo. El desafío que debe afrontar toda sociedad democrática es el de cómo este hecho, en lugar de ser un factor de división social, se transforma en un factor de enriquecimiento de la vida colectiva. [...] Cuando la sociedad es percibida por todos como un sistema de ayuda mutua que respeta la autonomía individual en la elección de planes de vida, se profundizan los lazos de fraternidad y se consolida la cohesión social.<sup>75</sup>

Alfonsín's ideas of nationhood and democracy were completely in tune with the articles published in *Punto de Vista* during the period analysed in this chapter. Alfonsín pronounced these words between 1986 and 1987, around the same years in which the magazine was mostly concerned with the re definition of the left, and in both stances there's a centrality given to the idea of plurality.

It is not a simple task to determine the reciprocal influences between *alfonsinismo* and the *Punto de Vista* group. Some of them knew Alfonsín in person – this is the case for those who participated in Grupo Esmeralda – but most of the initial editors of the magazine never met him.<sup>76</sup> All of them, however, welcomed Alfonsín's victory over the Peronist candidate, and Alfonsín's keenness in receiving advice from intellectuals, particularly at the beginning of his time in office. In Sarlo's account, in 1980s Argentina Peronism was a 'desert of intellectuals' while *alfonsinismo* was paradise.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, Alfonsín was carrying out admirable policies during his first years in office, prominently, the trial against the military juntas, which was the utmost concern of the democratic transition.

Although intellectuals put forward an autonomous project that could have many coincidences with Alfonsín's political project, they were not identical. In the new context, they sought to re-build a political project based on the modernisation of their previous political stances, the adoption of certain aspects of liberalism, which were to be combined

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<sup>75</sup> Pablo Giussani, *¿Por qué, doctor Alfonsín?* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana/Planeta, 1987), p. 200. Giussani's book is a selection of interviews with Alfonsín carried out between 1986 and 1987, and later re-arranged in sections and, consequently, it is not clarified the exact date of each interview.

<sup>76</sup> In Sarlo's account: 'Yo ni siquiera quise conocerlo a Alfonsín, porque a un político importante no lo tenés conocer salvo que quieras trabajar con él.' García and Mercader, 'Tozuda modernidad: entrevista a Beatriz Sarlo'.

<sup>77</sup> Hora and Trimboli, 'Beatriz Sarlo' [Interview], p. 189.

with a renewed socialism. The CCS was perhaps the most relevant example of this new project of synthesis between socialism and liberalism, which aimed to establish new political guidelines for the times to come. Nonetheless, towards the end of the 1980s, it became evident that to accomplish this intellectual enterprise presented more difficulties than expected. The hyper-specialisation of academics, the influence of the culture of spectacle in politics and the new role played by mass media, were obstacles for the development of the public intellectual. Additionally, the rise of the neo-liberal populist leader from the Peronist Party, Carlos Menem, towards 1989 was going to abate expectations for the social-democratic project of the 1980s. Retrospectively, that project designed during the post-dictatorship years might have accomplished some important goals, namely the consolidation of democracy, but it did not achieve the most ambitious ones, namely the solution of social inequalities and the consolidation of transparent and solid institutions. The sense of crisis and frustration due to the partial fulfilment of the goals set during the transition grew during the passage from the 1980s to the 1990s. This sensation of crisis would affect intellectuals and lead to a number of breaks and readjustments in *Punto de Vista* and in the CCS that would mark the end of the wave of optimism that had begun in 1983.

## Chapter 6: Crisis (1987-1993). Issues 31-47

Por supuesto, en el caso de *Punto de Vista* dimos una batalla por la modernidad estética despreciada por todas las ondas.<sup>1</sup>

The last period of *Punto de Vista* I analyse in this thesis covers the years 1987 to 1993, years through which seventeen new issues were published. The analysis of the first nine years of *Punto de Vista* in the previous chapters showed that each period of the magazine was characterised by a set of identifying features. The first period was significantly marked by the absence of a political voice and by the proliferation of cultural analysis and the revision of Argentine cultural history. The second period was, in turn, characterised by a progressive political openness, which was accompanied by a change in the magazine's format. The third period was also accompanied by a significant change in format, and by the introduction of sociological and historical debates regarding socialism and democracy. This fourth period is, perhaps, less compact than the previous ones, as different and new topics appeared for the first time in these years: from mass media to urban culture analysis, from theoretical discussions about postmodernism to specific debates about higher education in Argentina, from critiques about the Gulf War to analyses of the new Argentine government which took office in 1989. Although it is not possible to reduce this variety of subjects to one or two general themes, it is possible to identify that a sense of crisis permeated many of the essays published in the pages of *Punto de Vista*. Whether about culture or politics, intellectuals or philosophy, the times were seen as critical, and a rather pessimistic view characterised the writings of the members of *Punto de Vista* during this period.

Before considering this crisis, let me refer to some of the breaks and continuities of this period with regard to its predecessor. Broadly, it is possible to recognise that from issue 31 (December 1987) onwards, discussions about Marxism and democracy, and the type of sociological essay that had predominated in the period 1983-1987 garnered fewer comments. Portantiero and Aricó, two of the main intellectuals who contributed with sociological essays during the transition, did not write articles for *Punto de Vista* in this

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<sup>1</sup> Sarlo, 'Final', p. 2.

period, while de Ípola, another frequent commentator on matters regarding democracy and socialism, only contributed a number of articles on cultural topics. However, *Punto de Vista* did include a lesser number of articles about socialism and democracy throughout this period and developed some of the main strands set earlier. These were also by authors who had not yet been published in the magazine, such as Adam Przeworski, Albert Hirschman and Vicente Palermo.<sup>2</sup>

The subjects of cultural analysis and cultural history, however, were maintained and even highlighted during these years, in spite of the disappearance of book reviews since issue 33 in 1988. Although the magazine never disregarded culture completely (its masthead never ceased to be ‘revista de cultura’), during the first years of the transition literary criticism and other areas of culture had been side-shadowed by discussions about democracy and socialism. As Daniel Link recalls, some readers actually thought that *Punto de Vista* had given up on cultural analysis:

Una vez, recuerdo que por un error de diagramación, la revista salió sin la bajada ‘Revista de cultura’. Con Andrés Di Tella encaramos a Beatriz para que nos dijera si eso significaba un renunciamento (la revista iba a dedicarse sólo a la política) o no. Beatriz se rió y nos garantizó que la cultura seguía siendo el norte de la revista.<sup>3</sup>

Once discussions about democracy and socialism lost centrality, *Punto de Vista* again staged cultural debates in its main articles and reaffirmed its identity as a cultural publication. María Teresa Gramuglio, for example, wrote several articles about Argentine contemporary literature, which aimed to provide a criterion for the assessment of new literary trends. She tended to stress the importance of making distinctions and adopting an avant-garde attitude towards art and literature in these articles, a stance that would be something of a trademark of *Punto de Vista*.<sup>4</sup> For example, in issue 31, Gramuglio

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<sup>2</sup> Adam Przeworski and Michael Wallerstein ‘El capitalismo democrático en la encrucijada’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 34 (July-September 1989), 36-44. Albert O. Hirschman, ‘Opiniones obstinadas y democracia’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 35 (September-November 1989), 16-18. Vicente Palermo, ‘Sobre democracia y socialismo democrático’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 36 (December 1989), 38-42.

<sup>3</sup> Correspondence with Daniel Link (March 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Bourdieu’s analysis of the social function of taste and the cultural distinctions usually made by intellectuals in modern societies can shed some light on the strategies adopted by *Punto de Vista* in regards to cultural differentiation. For Bourdieu, ‘explicit aesthetic choices are in fact often constituted in opposition to the choices of the groups closest in social space, with whom the competition is most direct and most immediate, and more precisely, no doubt, in relation to those choices most clearly marked by the intention (perceived as pretension) of marking distinction vis-a-vis lower groups, such as, for intellectuals, the primary teachers



analysed both a series of book reviews which had appeared in *Sur* in 1938 and a survey about Argentine literature published in *Humor* in 1987. She praised the inclusion of unknown literature in *Sur* and criticised how, in *Humor*, interviewees did not mention new, unknown, or innovative writers, but only those who were already part of the literary canon and recognised by the public. For Gramuglio, some of those lesser-known books usually contained ‘las potencialidades de transformación de la narrativa’.<sup>5</sup>

This stance was aligned with *Punto de Vista*’s preference for avant-garde, innovative and non-market-oriented cultural productions, a stance that had already crystallised in its first period with the elevation of Juan José Saer as a central figure of Argentine literature (see Chapter 2). In these years, not only did Saer’s writings receive yet more complimentary reviews, but Saer himself also contributed to the magazine with essays on literature. For issue 35 (November 1989), he wrote an article about the Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz, and for issue 36 (December 1989), a text in which he analysed Borges’ aversion to French literature and his preference for the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition.

Other interventions in the direction of cultural history were Hilda Sabato’s analysis of culture and nationality in early twentieth-century Argentina, Oscar Terán’s article about the Argentine magazine *Imago Mundi* (1953-1956), Beatriz Sarlo and María Teresa Gramuglio’s works on Borges, Bioy Casares, and *Sur*, and Raúl Beceyro’s texts on Argentine cinema.<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that Terán’s article advanced part of his research

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Brassens, Jean Ferrat or Ferre. Thus the song, as a cultural property which (like photography) is almost universally accessible and genuinely common (since hardly anyone is not exposed at one moment or another to the “successes” of the day), calls for particular vigilance from those who intend to mark their difference. The intellectuals, artists and higher-education teachers seem to hesitate between systematic refusal of what can only be, at best, a middle-brow art, and a selective acceptance which manifests the universality of their culture and their aesthetic disposition.’ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 60. Bourdieu’s statement applies to the cultural strategy adopted by *Punto de Vista* since its beginnings, which in this period became most noteworthy as they sought to make distinctions within the more diversified cultural landscape of the post-transition.

<sup>5</sup> María Teresa Gramuglio, ‘Desconcierto en dos tiempos’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 31 (November-December 1987), 11-14 (p. 14).

<sup>6</sup> Hilda Sabato, ‘Pluralismo y nación’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 34, (July-September 1989), 2-5. Beatriz Sarlo, ‘Borges y la literatura argentina’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 34 (July-September 1989), 6-10. María Teresa Gramuglio, ‘Bioy, Borges y *Sur*. Diálogos y duelos’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 34 (July-September 1989), 11-16. Raúl Beceyro, ‘El repliegue. El cine argentino en 1989’. Oscar Terán, ‘Intelectuales y política en la Argentina 1956-1966’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 37 (July 1990), 18-22. Raúl Beceyro, ‘Sobre John Cassavetes’,

on the intellectual field of the 1960s in Argentina, which ultimately led to the publication of his well-known book *Nuestros Años Sesentas* in 1991. This work, along with Silvia Sigal's *Intelectuales y poder en la década del sesenta*, became foundational texts for the study of this key period of Argentina's intellectual history.<sup>7</sup>

In this sense, *Punto de Vista* was, still, a laboratory of preliminary texts, which later turned into books. One can find in the pages of the magazine advancements of some of the most relevant books on cultural and social analysis written by this generation of intellectuals. Apart from Terán's book, Sarlo's cutting-edge views on Borges were published in 1993 in her book *Borges, a Writer on the Edge*, which Sarlo dedicated to Juan Pablo Renzi, the artist friend of *Punto de Vista*, who died in 1992. This book originated in a series of lectures Sarlo gave at the University of Cambridge as a Visiting Professor in 1992. In these lectures, Sarlo put forward her analysis of the great Argentine writer and the Argentine cultural field of the early twentieth-century, which she had been developing since the early days of *Punto de Vista*, in many articles, and in some books, such as *Una modernidad periférica*.

Perhaps more noteworthy than the return to cultural history was the introduction of new topics of interest during this period. Most remarkably, urban studies and mass media analysis were introduced. While mass media mainly attracted the attention of Sarlo, who wrote a series of articles regarding this matter, to be addressed later in this chapter, urban studies were mainly introduced by a new figure within the *Punto de Vista* group: Adrián Gorelik.

Gorelik was a young architect – born in 1957, while most members of *Punto de Vista* were born in the 1940s – who used to attend Sarlo and Altamirano's workshops delivered at the Club de Cultura Socialista (CCS).<sup>8</sup> He was particularly interested in the urban history of Buenos Aires and he ultimately developed an academic career in this field, obtaining a PhD in History in 1997. In 1988, he published an article in *Punto de Vista* for the first time. This essay was co-authored with Graciela Silvestri and Anahí

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*Punto de Vista*, no. 45 (April 1993), 1-5; and Raúl Beceyro, 'La exclusión. Sobre Gatica, el mono, de Leonardo Favio', *Punto de Vista*, no. 46 (August 1993), 23-25.

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 3 in Chapter 1.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Adrián Gorelik (Buenos Aires, 24 August 2015).

Ballent, two architects who have also develop academic careers in the field of urban history. The article was a response to an essay by an Argentine philosopher, Ricardo Forster, about modernity and architecture published in the previous instalment. After this initial intervention, Gorelik, Silvestri and Ballent would write a considerable number of essays about urban studies throughout this fourth period of *Punto de Vista*. Together, they set out to analyse problems regarding urban space, prominently in relation to the city of Buenos Aires.<sup>9</sup> They took into account the history of the urban space, its transformations throughout the twentieth century, and the public policies implemented by the city and national governments. The viewpoint set forth in these articles singularly matched the type of analysis *Punto de Vista* had always privileged, namely historical and sociological analyses of culture. If a main strand developed in the initial years of the magazine was called sociology of literature, one could say that Gorelik and his fellow architects, Silvestri and Ballent, set forth a sociology of urban space. Hence, *Punto de Vista* incorporated a new topic of interest but viewed through the analytical lens that the magazine had always favoured.

During this period, Gorelik would also increasingly engage with the project of the magazine and in issue 42 (April 1992), he appeared for the first time as a member of the editorial board. This was the first incorporation of a new member since issue 20 (May 1984), when Portantiero and Aricó joined the magazine's staff. Gorelik would later become a central figure for *Punto de Vista*, as he worked with Sarlo very closely, becoming sub-director in 2004 after three main members of the magazine, Altamirano, Gramuglio, and Sabato, left the review. Despite this split in in the board, Gorelik and Altamirano have worked together since 1997 on another the project: an academic

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<sup>9</sup> These articles were: Anahí Ballent, Adrián Gorelik and Graciela Silvestri, 'Ante las puertas de la Ciudad. Zarathustra o su mono', *Punto de Vista*, no. 32 (April-June 1988), 17-24. Adrián Gorelik and Graciela Silvestri, 'Paseo de compras: un recorrido por la decadencia urbana de Buenos Aires', *Punto de Vista*, no. 37 (July 1990), 23-28. Adrián Gorelik and Graciela Silvestri, 'Réquiem para el puerto. El pensamiento urbano y las transformaciones de la ciudad', *Punto de Vista*, no. 39 (December 1990), 17-25. Adrián Gorelik 'Miradas sobre Buenos Aires: itinerarios', *Punto de Vista*, no. 41 (December 1991), 21-28. Anahí Ballent, 'Ciudad y utopía. La trama del hechizo', *Punto de Vista*, no. 42 (April 1992), 11-14. Adrián Gorelik and Graciela Silvestri, 'El pasado como futuro. Una utopía reactiva en Buenos Aires', *Punto de Vista*, no. 42 (April 1992), 22-26. Adrián Gorelik, 'Intelectuales en la ciudad: interrogantes sobre la crítica y la reforma', *Punto de Vista*, no. 44 (November 1992), 27-32. Anahí Ballent, Adrián Gorelik and Graciela Silvestri, 'Las metrópolis de Benjamin', *Punto de Vista*, no. 45 (April 1993), 19-27. Adrián Gorelik, 'Figuras urbanas', *Punto de Vista*, no. 47 (December 1993), 9-12.

magazine on intellectual history called *Prismas*, published yearly until this day.<sup>10</sup>

Another feature which was maintained during this period is the presence of foreign influences, many of which had already appeared in previous years. Theodor W. Adorno and Jürgen Habermas, who have been mentioned in Chapter 5, became recurring references in many of the articles published throughout this period. Issue 35 (September-November 1989), for example, included three main articles on Adorno's oeuvre, by Carlos Altamirano, Raúl Beceyro and Federico Monjeau. These were transcriptions of papers they delivered at the Jornadas Adorno, held in Buenos Aires in August 1989. In each of these articles, a certain aspect of Adorno's contributions to cultural criticism was analysed. Altamirano examined Adorno as an intellectual figure and praised his political stance, ending his text with criticism against the widespread 'estupidez' and 'autocomplacencia' of contemporary intellectuals. Beceyro analysed Argentine cinema in the light of Adorno's theories about art, the cultural industry and films. Monjeau, in turn, analysed Adorno's aesthetic theory in the light of his conceptualizations about music, and atonal music in particular. Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis of the cultural industry under late capitalism in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, where they unveiled the enormous influence of corporate interest and consumerism in cultural production, provided a key perspective from which to analyse the new cultural trends in Argentina.

Habermas was another German philosopher of reference during this period. Not only were his works and theories cited in many articles, his trajectory and figure as intellectual was also analysed in issue 36 by the sociologist John Torpey.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, a text by Habermas himself, '¿Qué significa el socialismo hoy?' appeared in issue 41 (December 1991).<sup>12</sup> This essay offered a very clear articulation of the different stances adopted by the left after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reconfiguration of Marxist

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<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of *Prismas* as a promoter of intellectual history studies in Argentina see Paula Bruno, 'Notas sobre la historia intelectual argentina entre 1983 y la actualidad', *Cercles. Revista d'història cultural*, n° 13 (2010), 113-33.

<sup>11</sup> John Torpey, 'Habermas y los historiadores', *Punto de Vista*, no. 36 (December 1989), 14-21.

<sup>12</sup> Jürgen Habermas, '¿Qué significa el socialismo hoy? La revolución restauradora y la necesidad de una revisión desde la izquierda', *Punto de Vista*, no. 41 (December 1991), 3-14. The original text was published as 'Nachholende Revolution und linker Revisions bedarf: was heist Sozialismus heute?' in *Die Nachholende Revolution: Kleine Politische Schriften*, no. 7 (1990), 179-204. This version was a translation by Hilda Sabato from the English version which was published in *New Left Review*, no. 183 (1990).

political programs into social-democratic parties in Europe. Habermas criticised the adoption of managerial practices within left-leaning political parties and the fact that Marxism was increasingly becoming a matter of academic debate. Habermas' text, however, proposed that, insofar as the democratic universalisation of individual rights within capitalist societies was not accomplished, there was still a motive for socialists to fight for progress.<sup>13</sup>

Arguably, Habermas became an intellectual model for the Punto de Vista group, as his writings provided an all-encompassing interpretation of modern capitalism from a non-dogmatic leftist perspective which at the same time proposed a rather optimistic view about the challenges of the twenty-first century and the role intellectuals were to play in it. Therefore, the names of Adorno and Habermas replaced, to some extent, those of Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu in this period. Altamirano, however, dedicated an essay to Williams in 1988, in an obituary where Altamirano fondly remembered the time when he and Sarlo had met Williams in England for the interview they published in *Punto de Vista* 6 (see Chapter 2).<sup>14</sup> Although other foreign references were cited in some of the articles written by the members of *Punto de Vista*, such as Walter Benjamin and Hans Robert Jauss, Habermas and Adorno were the more frequent recurrent references.<sup>15</sup>

Aside from these incorporations presented between issues 30 and 47, what most notably characterises this period is the idea of crisis. Between 1987 and 1993, this sense of crisis permeated discussions in the pages of the magazine, and the optimism that had prevailed in the years 1983-1987 progressively turned into pessimism. This was, to a certain extent, related to the political situation in Argentina, as Alfonsín's government started to face many setbacks after 1987 and the President's popularity decreased significantly towards the end of the decade. Not only had he given impulse to the Full

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Carlos Altamirano, 'Raymond Williams (1921-1988)'.

<sup>15</sup> Hans Robert Jauss is a German literary historian and theorist from the Konstanz School, known for introducing the theory of aesthetic reception in literary studies. For an overview of the theory of reception see Paul de Man, 'Introduction', in Hans Robert Jauss, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. vii-xxvi. Jauss' aesthetic of reception was usually cited in Gramuglio and Sarlo's analyses of literature. See, for example, María Teresa Gramuglio, 'Historias de la literatura argentina: pasión y deseos', *Punto de Vista*, no. 36 (December 1989), 25-29.

Stop and Due Obedience laws (see Chapter 4), which *Punto de Vista* strongly condemned, Alfonsín also failed in managing the hyperinflation of 1989, one of the worst economic crises in Argentina's contemporary history.<sup>16</sup> By the end of the decade, it became clear that there was little left of the support that a sector of the intellectual field – comprised of many members of the CCS and, to a lesser extent, *Punto de Vista* as a magazine – had given to Alfonsín and his government during the first years of the democratic transition.

Six months earlier than expected, in July 1989, Alfonsín had to leave office and was succeeded by the elected President Carlos Saúl Menem.<sup>17</sup> Menem was a Peronist *caudillo* from La Rioja province, whose presidency marked the consolidation of neoliberalism in Argentina.<sup>18</sup> Soon after taking office, Menem gave amnesty to all the military and guerrilla leaders who had been sentenced in the trial against the juntas. This charismatic Peronist also fostered the privatisation of public companies, favoured the establishment of multi-national corporations in the country, and implemented labour flexibility; measures that had long-lasting negative consequences for Argentina's economy.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Menem cultivated a political style opposite to Alfonsín's; he was averse to grand political speeches and he preferred to make use of mass media to communicate directly to citizens, who were rather considered as the audience.<sup>20</sup> Menem is now

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<sup>16</sup> As Halperín Donghi has pointed out, if between 1983 and 1985 politics dictated the future of democracy, since 1985 the economy was going to take a more predominant role. Tulio Halperín Donghi, 'Prólogo', in *Argentina en el fin de siglo, democracia, mercado y nación (1983/2001)*, ed. by Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2013), pp. 11-18 (p. 18).

<sup>17</sup> As Luis Alberto Romero points out, the succession of 1989 was the first time since 1928 in which a president ceded power to the candidate of an opposition party, which was a sign of democratic consolidation. Romero, *A History of Argentina*, p. 285.

<sup>18</sup> *Caudillos* were, in the nineteenth century, 'military strongmen who ruled through clientelistic methods and often mustered a large popular following'. Goebel, p. 3. In Argentina today, the term refers to political leaders who also attract popular support by clientelistic methods and are usually aligned with Peronism.

<sup>19</sup> According to historian Luis Alberto Romero, society became divided in two during *menemismo*. 'While a vast sector sank into poverty and saw its standard of living decline, many wealthy people prospered ostentatiously, thereby making the inequalities apparent to all, a virtual spectacle. [...] Thus, the old society – relatively homogeneous and egalitarian in many respects – gave way to a new society that was sharply divided, separated by different possibilities for consumption and unequal access to basic services.' Romero, *A History of Argentina*, p. 320. Another relevant study of the social fragmentation unleashed under *menemismo* is Maristella Svampa, *La sociedad excluyente: La Argentina bajo el signo del neoliberalismo* (Buenos Aires: Taurus, 2005). Svampa examines in her study how sectors of the middle class under Menem's administration fell into poverty.

<sup>20</sup> For an analysis of Menem's populist political style see Marcos Novaro and Vicente Palermo, 'Menem: a new style in politics', in *The Argentina Reader*, ed. by Nouzeilles and Montaldo, pp. 487-94.

remembered as a corrupt politician who made an ostentatious exhibition of wealth, and who established spurious businesses with corporations.<sup>21</sup> In the pages of *Punto de Vista*, Sarlo analysed Menem's first year as President, where she wrote a bitter and incisive critique of this political style, which she labelled as cynical and excessive.<sup>22</sup>

In this context, the members of the CCS, and along with them the members of *Punto de Vista*, saw themselves affected by the political changes and the reconfiguration of intellectual roles in Argentina. During the democratic transition, they had been promoters of theoretical debates and even worked closely with the government, but now, with Menem, their protagonism decreased radically, as their advice was no longer required. As Romero has argued, the neoliberal discourse brought about by *menemismo* reduced all debates to the economy and to 'stability', giving an end to the richer discourse of the transition.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, in 1991, the leader of the CCS José Aricó died, and the Club had to re-evaluate some of its initial goals. These crises in the political and intellectual fields crystallised in 1993 when the CCS's founding group split up, and half of *Punto de Vista*'s editorial board left the Club.

The crisis within the CCS marked a break in the unifying moment that had been the transition to democracy, which had distinct repercussions in the pages of *Punto de Vista*. In issue 47, published in 1993, Sarlo published an emblematic article that articulated very clearly the sense of crisis that cut across many of the texts published in this last period. She stated that:

Tres crisis definen estos años que nos separan del fin de siglo: la crisis de las ideas de cambio como proceso que modifica a la sociedad en todos sus puntos comprometiendo la acción y el destino de la mayor parte de sus miembros (la crisis de una idea 'total' de cambio); la crisis de las vanguardias y de los valores estéticos de la modernidad y, con ella, la de una continuidad cultural conflictiva; la crisis de la figura clásica del intelectual, que sigue a la reestructuración de las relaciones entre niveles culturales a partir de la organización massmediática de la dimensión simbólica.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> A brief account of the corruption scandals during Menem's administration can be found in Romero, *A History of Argentina*, p. 313.

<sup>22</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, 'Menem', *Punto de Vista*, no. 39 (December 1990), 1-4.

<sup>23</sup> Romero, *A History of Argentina*, pp. 319-20.

<sup>24</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, '¿Arcaicos o marginales? Situación de los intelectuales en el fin de siglo', *Punto de Vista*, no. 47 (December 1993), 1-5 (p. 2).

These three crises that Sarlo highlighted in the last issue of *Punto de Vista* here analysed – the crisis of the idea of ‘total’ change, the crisis of modern aesthetic values, and the crisis of intellectuals – will be examined in detail in the pages below as the main strands developed by *Punto de Vista* during the period 1987-1993.

### Modernism versus Postmodernism and the question of value

The three crises described by Sarlo in her article of issue 47 (1993) quoted above were made visible to intellectuals during the passage from the 1980s to the 1990s, coinciding with the last period of *Punto de Vista* analysed here. In these years, between 1987 and 1993, the magazine included several articles about a topic that, I argue, underpinned these three crises: postmodernism. In effect, Sarlo’s statement heading this chapter that her review battled for an aesthetic modernity against ‘todas las ondas’ can be linked to a context in which the word modern (at least at an intellectual level) started to point to the past, and ‘the new’ was commonly associated with the postmodern. The editors included many articles about postmodernism between issues 31 and 45, which marks their interest in exploring this contemporary discussion. However, they usually held a negative view about postmodernism, especially when this term was set in relation to cultural production and cultural analysis. In particular, they interpreted postmodernism as a crisis of the values – aesthetic but also political – in which they had been born and bred.

A preliminary observation must be posed here. Although the word ‘postmodernism’ first entered the philosophical lexicon in 1979, when Jean-François Lyotard published *The Postmodern Condition*, *Punto de Vista* came late to this discussion.<sup>25</sup> For example, Lyotard’s 1979 book was only reviewed in *Punto de Vista* in 1985, six years after its publication, and received a very critical commentary from Altamirano, who judged *The Postmodern Condition* superficial and inconsistent with its

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<sup>25</sup> Attempts to define the concept of postmodernism usually begin by arguing that it is impossible to provide a univocal definition. However, an overview of the notion of postmodernism in philosophical terms, which accounts for the precursors of postmodernism, its main exponents and its critics is Gary Aylesworth, ‘Postmodernism’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward Zalta (Spring 2015), <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/postmodernism>> [accessed 11 June 2018].



initial postulates.<sup>26</sup> In this key essay, Altamirano reviewed the main breaks with modernism set forth by anti-modern or postmodern currents of thought, of which Lyotard had become a leading figure. Highlighting the influence of the *maîtres penseurs* of postmodernism, such as Heidegger, Freud, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein, Altamirano claimed that three main breaks with modernity characterised this new thinking about culture, knowledge, and aesthetics in late capitalist societies. The first break was the end of a philosophy of history according to which societies – or, alternatively, humanity, the Hegelian spirit, the nation – tended to a better, more transparent future. Altamirano recognised in Foucault a main challenger to this philosophy of history based on the idea of progress that had dominated modern thought from the eighteenth century until the late twentieth century.<sup>27</sup> The second break was, in Altamirano's view, the crisis of the subject, individual or collective, as a main category of modern thought, Nietzsche along with other French structuralists being the main promoters of the death of the subject. The third crisis was a crisis of grand narratives or, in other words, of all-encompassing worldviews that provided a system of knowledge that was univocal, centred, and organised hierarchically, Marxism being an example of a modern *grand récit*. In opposition to these narratives, postmodernism would conceive of knowledge as fragmentary and as non-accumulative.

In *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard argues that in post-industrial societies with rapid technological advancements, knowledge has been transformed into information, and the different spheres of knowledge have become less connected to each other. As Gary Aylesworth suggests, according to Lyotard, 'new, hybrid disciplines develop[ed] without connection to old epistemic traditions, especially philosophy, and this means science only plays its own game and cannot legitimate others, such as moral prescription.'<sup>28</sup> As a consequence of this fragmentation of knowledge, political antagonism in societies have become less decisive while traditional centres of collective identification, such as political parties, have lost any power of attraction. Political conflict in Lyotard's view is also resolved fragmentarily, through temporary contracts. This is a point that Altamirano highlighted in his review, for his main criticism against Lyotard is that he leaves no room

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<sup>26</sup> Altamirano, 'Ideología y sensibilidad postmodernas'.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> Aylesworth, 'Postmodernism'.

for a political consensus that would include the entirety of society.

In the last paragraph of his review, Altamirano questioned the political destinations to which Lyotard's reasoning leads: either to endorsing a liberalism without illusions in which dissent is solved via temporary contracts or to renouncing politics and grand narratives.<sup>29</sup> Altamirano's critique, which read postmodernism as a current of thought that erased differences and hierarchies, was addressed to these new theoretical tendencies rather than to Lyotard himself.

Furthermore, I suggest that the belated inclusion of discussions around postmodernism is explained by the fact that in the early 1980s the *Punto de Vista* group was mostly invested in redefining an intellectual project in connection to politics, culture, and the new democratic institutions emerging in the transition to democracy, and was thus far from the crisis of values they identified in postmodernism. As analysed in the previous chapters, these intellectuals set forth discussions about democracy, about the role of intellectuals, and about the aesthetics of memory, which aimed to produce a grand narrative that would account for the past and produce a project for the future. This project was in stark contrast to postmodern thought, as Lyotard, for example, defined postmodern as 'incredulity toward meta-narratives', and the dissolution of epistemic coherence.<sup>30</sup>

Although the peak moment of the discussion on modernism/postmodernism in *Punto de Vista* took place in the last period here analysed, another early reference to this discussion appeared in issue 21 (1984), as the magazine included Jürgen Habermas' text 'Modernidad: un proyecto incompleto', an essay that can provide an example of what the editors of the magazine understood as postmodernism.<sup>31</sup> The article reproduced in *Punto*

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<sup>29</sup> Altamirano, 'Ideología y sensibilidad postmodernas', p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. xxiv.

<sup>31</sup> Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernidad: un proyecto incompleto', *Punto de Vista*, no. 21 (August 1984), 27-31. This essay was originally delivered as a talk in 1980 when Habermas received the Theodor Adorno Prize awarded by the city of Frankfurt. It was subsequently delivered as a James Lecture at the New York Institute for the Humanities at the New York University in 1981 and published under the title 'Modernity versus Postmodernity' in *New German Critique*, no. 22, (Winter, 1981). Lastly, it was published under the title 'Modernity. An Incomplete Project' in *Postmodern culture*, ed. by Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985), pp. 3-15. *Punto de Vista* reproduced this text from the version published in *New German Critique*, although it was not stated who was in charge of the translation. I will use the version of *New German Critique* to refer to this text.

*de Vista* 21 was mostly centred on the crisis of modernity, which Habermas understood as ‘the decline of substantive reason, the differentiation of science, morality and art’.<sup>32</sup>

Habermas regarded this crisis as the result of the development of post-industrial societies in which the hyper-autonomisation of different spheres of knowledge, such as economy, politics, art, philosophy, and science, which the subsequent detachment of these fields from everyday life practices has become consolidated. For Habermas, this state of affairs should not be understood as a given reality, but only as a deviation in the fulfilment of modernity’s project. In his view, to fulfil modernity’s project means to draw together these spheres of knowledge while also maintaining its autonomy, as Habermas states that ‘the project aims at a differentiated relinking of modern culture with an everyday praxis’, adding that ‘the life-world has to become able to develop institutions out of itself which sets limits to the internal dynamics and to the imperatives of an almost autonomous economic system.’<sup>33</sup> The Habermasian stance with regard to the crisis of modernity seems to pave the way for political action, insofar as there is a political character involved in the goal of linking ‘science, morality, and art’ with the ‘life-world’.<sup>34</sup> This is further clarified when Habermas criticises, at the end of his essay, the postmodernism of the ‘neoconservatives’, for whom ‘science, when properly understood, has become irrevocably meaningless for the orientation of the life-world’ and for whom ‘politics must be kept as far aloof as possible from the demands of moral-practical justification.’<sup>35</sup> Habermas’ arguments about modernity as an incomplete project chimed well with the expectations of the *Punto de Vista* group in relation to the role of experts in society, for Habermas’ position seemed to aim at safeguarding the culture of experts, and, even more, to democratising it via political action.

As suggested, the controversy regarding postmodernism and the so-called crisis of modernity gained momentum some years later, and *Punto de Vista*’s issues 29 to 45 provide a testimony of several points of view with regard to this debate. Andreas

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<sup>32</sup> Jürgen Habermas, ‘Modernity versus Postmodernity’, *New German Critique*, no. 22 (Winter, 1981), 3-14 (p. 13).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Huyssen's text 'Guía del postmodernismo', for example, was included in the separate section in issue 29, which occupied several central pages of the issue.<sup>36</sup> The text provided an account of different uses of the term postmodernism between the 1960s and the 1980s, in Europe and the United States. It also set forth a fundamental genealogy of the term in relation to different spheres of culture. In particular, twentieth-century artistic avant-garde movements were analysed in detail and explained as one of the last expressions of modernity.

Against Habermas, Huyssen concluded that modernity's project was not going to be fulfilled, but that such unfulfillment did not entail the consolidation of irrationality or an apocalyptic state of despairing.<sup>37</sup> In Huyssen's view, postmodernism also had the potential of enlightening areas of culture that had been disregarded by modernity, as he stated that 'se ha ampliado nuestra conciencia de que otras culturas, no europeas ni occidentales, no deben ser dominadas o conquistadas sino puesta en relación con la nuestra.'<sup>38</sup> He also highlighted the experiences of feminism and environmentalism as postmodern movements that were significantly changing social structures and cultural attitudes. Huyssen's diagnostic of postmodernism differed from Habermas' view insofar as he conveyed a positive view of new postmodern tendencies, which he identified less with a loss of grand-narratives and more with a new kind of resistance to the traditional values of modernity. For example, Huyssen argued – citing Foucault – for a local and specific intellectual against the 'modern intellectual' who believed him or her entitled to speak for the others at the 'cutting edge of time'.<sup>39</sup>

Although Huyssen's text occupied a central space in the pages of the issue, a fact which signalled the relevance of the text, *Punto de Vista* would never hold such an optimistic view of postmodern trends. This was, for example, evident in an article by Gramuglio published in *Punto de Vista* 42, where she reviewed Huyssen's book *The Great Divide*, a collection of his essays published in *New German Critique*, which included the

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<sup>36</sup> Andreas Huyssen, 'Guía del postmodernismo', *Separata, Punto de Vista*, no. 29 (April-July 1987). This text was first published under the title 'Mapping the postmodern' in *New German Critique*, no. 33 (Autumn 1984). The version published in *Punto de Vista* was translated by Segunda Espigonelli.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. xxxvii.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. xl.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

article published in *Punto de Vista*.<sup>40</sup> Although, overall, she praised the book, Gramuglio showed distrust towards some of Huyssen's ideas, in particular, his anticipation of a new age in which artistic vanguards, postmodernism and mass culture were combining in an innovative and productive way. Gramuglio also distrusted the importance Huyssen gave to environmental movements and feminism, as she disbelieved in the potential of transforming social relations that Huyssen assigned to them.<sup>41</sup> The scepticism of Gramuglio and her peers was explained, I argue, by their interpretation of postmodernism as a trend that dissolved differences, hierarchies, and consequently, values. For the *Punto de Vista* group, mass culture could not be equated with vanguard movements in art, not because mass culture could not have been valuable at some moment in history, but because the culture of the masses, at the end of the twentieth century, was aesthetically poor and dominated by market trends. Later in this chapter, I will explore how *Punto de Vista* set out to make distinctions in art and cultural production, as the editors believed that the market was producing low-quality cultural content for the masses. Also, feminism and environmentalism could not be equated with political movements such as socialism because they were too minor, local, or specific to produce real change. In short, *Punto de Vista*'s scepticism with regard to postmodernism was rooted in the belief that distinctions must be made within cultural production and politics, distinctions that postmodernism would allegedly threaten to erase.

The stance adopted by the magazine can be further explored in other articles published during this period, many of which were authored by Latin American scholars. For example, issues 31 and 33 included texts by Chilean scholar José Joaquín Brunner and Chilean-German intellectual Norbert Lechner, respectively, about postmodernism in Latin America.<sup>42</sup> Brunner's article claimed that the uneasiness with which scholars in central countries were perceiving the end of European modernity, with its explosion of

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<sup>40</sup> María Teresa Gramuglio, 'Un postmodernismo crítico', *Punto de Vista*, no. 42 (April 1992), 27-33.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 32-33.

<sup>42</sup> José Joaquín Brunner, 'Entonces ¿existe o no la modernidad en América Latina?', *Punto de Vista*, no. 31 (November-December 1987), 1-5. Norbert Lechner, 'Un desencanto llamado posmodernidad', *Punto de Vista*, no. 33 (September-December 1988), 25-31. Brunner's text was a transcription of his paper at a Conference organised in 1987 by the Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales Buenos Aires about Modernity and Postmodernity in Latin America.

cultural trends, the disappearance of *grand récits* and the introduction of spectacle in politics, should not affect Latin American intellectuals, where the context was very different.<sup>43</sup> In Brunner's view, modernisation had not been completed in Latin America, a continent whose culture is defined by the hybridity of European and American elements. Brunner directed the discussion of postmodernism in Latin America towards the question about the best political system for maintaining the hybridity that is characteristic of the region, concluding that democracy was preferable to other kinds of political projects, based on nationalist or Marxist worldviews.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast, Lechner's text in issue 33, entitled 'Un desencanto llamado posmodernidad', applied the term to the Latin American context without problematizing it much. Lechner defined postmodernity as a 'political disenchantment', and particularly in Latin America, he perceived a disenchantment with democracy, modernisation and progress. Lechner described a modern faith in progress that had inspired revolutionary movements in the twentieth century, and which entailed the conception of a total rupture with the present. Instead, he posited that postmodern culture abandons the idea of univocal rationality and of an ideal future, while it proposes a reformist viewpoint, which neither resorts to an ideal utopia nor rejects the present.<sup>45</sup> Far from being pessimistic, Lechner found potential in the advent of such a postmodern disenchantment, as he stated that 'El desencanto puede ser políticamente muy fructífero. La sensibilidad posmoderna fomenta la dimensión experimental e innovadora de la política: el arte de lo posible.'<sup>46</sup> Therefore, Brunner's and Lechner's texts conveyed two different perspectives on postmodernity, perhaps not contradictory but very distant, from the expected Latin American point of view.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> 'Pues aquí, ni la modernidad – salvo en la visión de algunas elites – estuvo ligada a los principios de la Ilustración europea, cuyo fin ahora se nos anuncia, ni se comporta, nunca, como una experiencia espiritual o social unitaria. [...] Tampoco cabe hablar aquí de una postmodernidad, pues ésta se define, a su vez, estrictamente en relación con la autocomprensión europea de la modernidad.' Brunner, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Brunner, p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Lechner, p. 30.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>47</sup> It must be taken into account that the main references in the discussion of postmodernism in Latin American cultural studies are the intellectuals whose interventions were included in *Punto de Vista*: Brunner, García Canclini, Lechner, Richard, and Sarlo. Jesús Martín Barbero, whose works on Latin American studies such are very important, can be added to this list. For an overview of their contributions

A few years later, in issue 40, three articles that also revolved around postmodernity from a Latin American perspective were published. The texts were transcriptions of papers by Nelly Richard, Beatriz Sarlo and Néstor García Canclini, delivered at the Latin American Studies Association Conference in April 1991, at a panel on cultural studies organised by Jean Franco.

Nelly Richard, a French-Chilean literary critic and founder of *Revista de Crítica Cultural* (1990-2008), has been many times compared to Sarlo, not only because they belong to the same generation of Latin American intellectuals, but also because they are two women who became central figures within the field of cultural studies from the 1990s onwards.<sup>48</sup> In her paper, Richard argued that, although Latin American culture was re-valorised by postmodern currents of thought as a subaltern culture, such re-valorisation was being made from the hegemonic spaces of academia (European countries and the United States), and that consequently, the traditional separation centre/periphery was re-established, rather than dissolved:

Celebrar la ‘diferencia’ como festividad exótica (complemento de ‘otredad’ destinado a matizar – más que subvertir – la ley universal) no es lo mismo que otorgarle al sujeto de esa ‘diferencia’ el derecho a autogestionar sus propias condiciones de manejo discursivo [...]. Incluso cuando la hipótesis vigente es la del descentramiento, quienes la formulan siguen rodeados del crédito – académico o institucional – que les otorga el ubicarse en ‘el centro’ del debate.<sup>49</sup>

What Richard suggested was that, ultimately, the postmodern re-valorisation of the marginal subject, namely the Latin American subject, was nothing but another stance of Euro-centrism. A similar argument was held by Sarlo in a later text, where she politely

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to matters of modernity/postmodernity in Latin America see Hermann Herlinghaus, ‘Comprender la modernidad heterogénea: recolocar la crítica dentro de la crítica’, *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 66, no. 193 (October-December 2000), 771-84. See also George Yúdice, ‘Intellectuals and Civil Society in Latin America’, *Annals of Scholarship*, vol. 11, no. 1-2 (1996), 157-74.

<sup>48</sup> Nelly Richard is a Chilean theorist and essayist, and founder and editor of *Revista de Crítica Cultural* (1990 – 2008). She is considered a key figure in Latin American’s recent intellectual history. A study of her contributions to Latin American cultural studies is Tomás Peters Núñez, ‘Nelly Richard’s Crítica Cultural: Theoretical Debates and Politico-Aesthetic Explorations in Chile (1970-2015)’ (PhD thesis, Birkbeck, University of London, 2016). Francine Masiello, for example, has argued that Sarlo and Richard have been the principal theorists of an aesthetic turn in Latin America.’ Masiello, *The Art of Transition*, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> Nelly Richard, ‘Periferias culturales y descentramientos postmodernos’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 40 (July-September 1991), 5-7 (p. 6).

but also rather overtly accused European and American scholars of adopting a sociological point of view when analysing Latin American cultural productions. Sarlo claimed that ‘they [the non-Latin Americans] look at Latin American videos with sociological eyes, emphasizing their social or political merits and overlooking their discursive problems.’<sup>50</sup> In an attitude that reflects to a great extent *Punto de Vista*’s project, Sarlo defended the intellectual point of view over the notion that all Latin American products are supposed to reflect the marginal subject. She illustrated her accusation with the example of an Argentine film director whose movie was rejected in Europe for being too European.<sup>51</sup>

However, García Canclini’s intervention in this conference was less derogatory of the new forms of the cultural industry.<sup>52</sup> In the article, García Canclini provided an account of cultural studies in Latin America from the 1980s onwards. In stark contrast to, for example, Adorno’s views, García Canclini stated that the cultural industry did not encourage the constitution of a homogeneous culture for the masses; on the contrary, it multiplied cultural offers and re-configured traditions and customs.<sup>53</sup> García Canclini’s final remarks about cultural studies in the postmodern era postulated a hybridisation of

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<sup>50</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, ‘Cultural studies and literary criticism at the crossroads of values’, *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, vol. 8, no.1 (1999), 115-24 (p. 122). This article was first presented by Sarlo as a talk given at Duke University, in the Department of Romance Languages, October 1996, under the title ‘Cultural studies and literary criticism: allies or enemies?’, and later, in Spanish, at the University of Chile in May 1997. It was published in Spanish in *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, no. 15 (1997) and later in the *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*.

<sup>51</sup> ‘I tend to judge them [the artistic production from Latin Americans] from an aesthetic perspective, placing secondary importance on their social and political impact.’ Sarlo, ‘Cultural studies and literary criticism’, p. 122.

<sup>52</sup> García Canclini is an Argentine-born scholar who has worked and lived in Mexico since the 1970s until the present day. His works, which incorporate diverse disciplines such as anthropology, philosophy and sociology, are main contributions to the field of Latin American Cultural Studies. In particular, his books *Culturas Híbridas* and *Cultura y Comunicación: entre lo global y lo local* have been very influential in studies of Latin American culture.

<sup>53</sup> ‘La literatura antropológica suele mirar las industrias culturales como si sólo homogeneizaran a las sociedades y destruyeran las diferencias. Esta homogeneización se haría mediante la absorción de las culturas tradicionales y las locales por parte de una codificación masiva y transnacional de los procesos simbólicos. [...] Pero los trabajos recientes sobre comunicación masiva y sobre recepción del arte y la literatura revelan que la expansión de la llamada cultura de masas, lejos de eliminar las diferencias, multiplica las ofertas, facilita el acceso de públicos más amplios a repertorios de distintas culturas y propicia diversas apropiaciones e interpretaciones de los bienes culturales en relación con las tradiciones de las que provienen los receptores.’ Néstor García Canclini, ‘Los estudios culturales de los 80 a los 90: perspectivas sociológicas y antropológicas en América Latina’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 40 (July-September 1991), 41-48 (p. 47).



disciplines as he argued that hegemonic and popular cultures are not separate compartments but rather hybrid cultures within a bricolage postmodern world where tradition and innovation live together.<sup>54</sup>

In summary, rather than presenting a common standpoint on postmodernism, the articles published in *Punto de Vista* can be read as a mosaic in which different and contradictory stances were conveyed. There is no single definition of postmodernism throughout these texts, but there are positive and negative valorisations on it, along with different considerations of modernity. Whereas Habermas stated the incomplete project of modernity, Huyssen suggested getting rid of traditional oppositions inherited from modernity. García Canclini invited the reader to embrace the new configurations of postmodern culture, while Brunner and Richard acknowledged the problems represented by the introduction of European terms into the Latin American context. It can be argued, however, that most of these debates were centred on the idea of postmodernism within culture: high culture, popular culture, art, artistic vanguards, the role of intellectuals, mass media and the cultural industry are all main concerns in these articles. The fact that these texts were published in *Punto de Vista* does not imply that the magazine adopted a postmodern style, but it expressed the interest of its editors in participating in a contemporary and transnational debate.

It was precisely within this series of discussions that Sarlo became a well-known intellectual within the Latin American context as well as worldwide, and therefore the following pages will mainly focus on her essays and books on this matter.<sup>55</sup> As in other occasions, her essays in *Punto de Vista* served as a laboratory of ideas, and the theorisations that Sarlo put forward in these years converged in one of her best known books, *Escenas de la vida postmoderna*, published in 1994, where she described contemporary mass culture in Buenos Aires from a perspective that was more nostalgic of certain aesthetic values of modernity than celebratory of new cultural trends.<sup>56</sup> Either confronting or adopting stances from other scholars – in her texts the influences of

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>55</sup> For the relevance of Sarlo's figure in the field of Latin American studies see Yúdice, p. 164-68.

<sup>56</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, *Escenas de la vida posmoderna. Intelectuales, arte y videocultura en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1995).

Bourdieu, Adorno and Habermas are as important as the influences of García Canclini, Brunner or Richard – Sarlo shaped her own standpoint about culture and art in the postmodern era. A main preoccupation of Sarlo was the dispute between an aesthetically valid culture – according to her own principles – and a market-oriented and mass culture that she saw as aesthetically poor. This point of view was generally attuned with the aesthetic values that *Punto de Vista* has traditionally set forth. The first articles in *Punto de Vista* where she paid attention to the reconfigurations of culture were centred on the question of cultural policies, and, while her first essays showed a less pessimistic stance, she would progressively develop a more negative view about the possibilities of safekeeping modern values.

One of Sarlo's main arguments regarding this discussion was that the cultural industry had to be somewhat regulated. In the first article of this series, which appeared in issue 32 and was entitled 'Políticas culturales: democracia e innovación', she articulated the influences of Adorno, Bourdieu and Williams and applied categories such as 'cultural capital' and 'cultural industry' to the Argentine context. More importantly, she explicitly adopted Brunner's idea that State apparatuses in Latin America mediate culture.<sup>57</sup> In her view, in capitalist societies, not only is material and political capital unequally distributed, but culture is also. For Sarlo, inequalities are not challenged but rather re-enforced by the cultural industry insofar as lower classes only have access to low-quality cultural contents while higher classes have a more diverse and sophisticated cultural offer available for them. In her own words:

La industria cultural excluye, en el caso de la televisión, de manera sistemática, alternativas formales, discursivas, ficcionales e informativas. Acá precisamente reside uno de los desbalances que sería preciso encarar con políticas públicas: para hacerlo, la discusión de cuestiones sustantivas es imprescindible. Renunciar a modificar esta situación implica condenar a la

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<sup>57</sup> Brunner argues that the passage from pre-modernism to modernism in Latin America is marked by a series of significant social changes, such as the growth of urban populations, literacy, and the constitution of a cultural industry. He identifies a passage from rural and local cultures to mass culture mediated by State apparatuses. Brunner underscores that modernity is 'una experiencia de la cultura que descentra sus fuentes de producción desde la comunidad hacia los "*aparatos*" de producción cultural, y transmuta las formas de visa elaboradas en común y transmitidas a lo largo del continuo de las generaciones sustituyéndolas por formas de consumo que eventualmente determinan la existencia, creando "estilos de vida" en torno a las maneras típicas de integración/exclusión en los mercados segmentados de bienes simbólicos.' Brunner, p. 3. (Italics in the original).

sociedad, pero fundamentalmente a los sectores con menor posibilidad de elección, al encierro en un mercado donde la libertad es una ficción jurídica.<sup>58</sup>

In Sarlo's account, the intervention of public policies to counterbalance the negative effects of the cultural industry was imperative. Cultural content was not equally distributed, and lower classes not only had access to a less diverse offer but also to a worse offer in terms of its substance. At the core of this problem there was a question about values, namely what is valuable at a cultural level and what is only a low-quality product of the cultural industry: not surprisingly the first section of her essay was entitled 'Valores'. As in Habermas' essay, Sarlo argued that culture promoted by experts had a role to play in society, a conception which intrinsically entailed the idea that there are certain hierarchies amongst cultural products.

Sarlo's second text on this matter, published in issue 33, returned to the problem of a stratified cultural offer, and it can be considered the second part of the text in issue 32. Entitled 'Una legislación para los mass media', the article provided an account of disputes around a bill that Alfonsín's government attempted to pass in order to regulate the media since the beginning of his government.<sup>59</sup> In the final paragraphs, Sarlo insisted on the idea of a stratified cultural offer and the need to establish market regulations for the media:

Legislar sobre comunicación incluye algunos supuestos. El primero tiene que ver con un mercado estratificado en el cual los sectores medios y altos encuentran dónde y cómo quieren la posibilidad de organizar su consumo de información, cultura y entretenimiento. Para el resto de la población, el mercado define oferta y produce efectos sobre la elección, la demanda y el gusto. [...] Si el estado se retira de la gestión directa o indirecta de medios de comunicación, las leyes del mercado (que ya es sabido cómo funcionan en la Argentina) en lugar de garantizar la igualdad de oportunidades consolidan las desigualdades sociales y simbólicas.<sup>60</sup>

An idea behind these words is that while middle and high classes enjoy a certain freedom

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<sup>58</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, 'Políticas culturales: democracia e innovación', *Punto de Vista*, no. 32 (April- June 1988), 8-13 (p. 12).

<sup>59</sup> Alfonsín unsuccessfully sought to modify the Audiovisual Law enacted in 1980, during the military dictatorship. Only in 2009, a new Audio-visual law, which limited the concentration of media outlet was passed by the Argentine congress. A study of reference for this issue is *Mucho ruido, pocas leyes: Economía y política de la comunicación en Argentina (1920-2004)*, ed. by Guillermo Mastrini (Buenos Aires: La Crujía, 2005).

<sup>60</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, 'Una legislación para los mass-media', *Punto de Vista*, no. 33 (December 1988), 15-19 (pp. 18-19).

of choice when it comes to cultural consumption, the lower classes are mainly dominated by market trends. The only counterbalance to this cultural inequality could be provided by the State and its duty to guarantee equal conditions for the population. For Sarlo, the solution was an active State (she provided the examples of France, Spain, Switzerland and Germany) that would not limit themselves to only regulating – for example, the amount of TV or radio signals – but a State that would give priority to certain cultural productions above others. Some underlying assumptions of Sarlo's argument are, firstly, that lower classes are rather passive recipients of cultural information, and, secondly, that there is a scale of values in terms of cultural productions, in other words, that not all cultural expressions hold the same value. The first assumption was nuanced in Sarlo's article in issue 35, 'Lo popular en la historia de la cultura', where cultural productions of traditionally lower (or popular) classes were taken into account. However, the second assumption, that is, the idea of a value scale with which to appreciate cultural productions, was central to the *Punto de Vista*'s defence of aesthetic modernity.

In summary, postmodernism and the crisis of modernity became main topics of discussion during this period of *Punto de Vista*, as these debates were at the background of discussions about culture, art and the role of intellectuals. A glance at the review's covers indicates how central this discussion became during the later 1980s and early 1990s as the cover of issue 31 read 'Modernidad en América Latina', issue 33's read 'Modernidad y postmodernidad. Los medios de comunicación de masas', and issue 34's read 'Imágenes postmodernas'. Nevertheless, the inclusion of this debate did not convey an acceptance of new postmodern trends by *Punto de Vista*. Some critics, such as Daniel Link, even consider that the magazine did not actually understand postmodernism.<sup>61</sup> In any case, the *Punto de Vista* group did identify postmodernism with a decay of the political and aesthetic values which they had traditionally endorsed, which ultimately explains Sarlo's characterisation of the magazine as championing an aesthetic modernity.

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<sup>61</sup> 'No sé si *Punto de Vista* entendió la posmodernidad. En ese punto, tampoco sé si entendió la modernidad (salvo que se entienda que la modernidad es lo que dice Habermas). Creo que, después de los dos años más intensos de la polémica modernidad-posmodernidad, yo mismo me prohibí manejar esa categoría.' Correspondence with Daniel Link (March 2017).

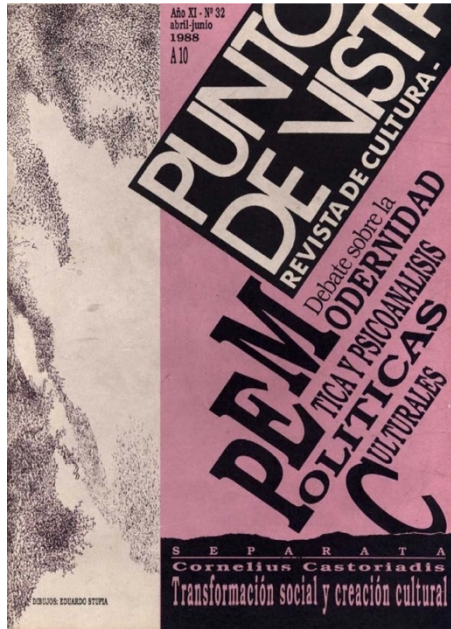


Figure 13. Cover of *Punto de Vista* 32 (1988).



Figure 14. Cover of *Punto de Vista* 35 (1989).

### Popular culture, mass culture, and the crossroads of value

Francine Masiello has pointed out that, particularly in Latin America, the move to democratisation in the aftermath of dictatorships demanded from intellectuals the rethinking of their relationship with popular traditions and emerging social movements.<sup>62</sup> In this regard, the question concerning the divorce between elite culture and popular culture, which in Argentina had been an important matter of intellectual debate already since the 1950s, was recast in a new fashion in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>63</sup> Arguably, not only

<sup>62</sup> Masiello, *The Art of Transition*, p. 24.

<sup>63</sup> Some of the most important works available on the matter of popular culture in twentieth century Argentina inevitably refer to the question of Peronism and nationalism, starting in the 1940s. Amongst these works Carlos Altamirano's *Bajo el signo de las masas* and Beatriz Sarlo's *La batalla de la ideas* deserve attention. Both books were part of a collection of volumes, *Biblioteca del Pensamiento Argentino*, edited by Halperín Donghi in 2001, and they included a selection of historical documents from the period 1943-1973. While Altamirano's volume focused on political documents, Sarlo's focused on intellectual and cultural debates. *La batalla de las ideas* was introduced by Altamirano's essay '¿Qué hacer con las masas?', which summarised the discussions at stake during the years of Peronism in relation to the divorce between popular classes and intellectual elites. Altamirano analyses in this text the interpretations of Peronism that Argentine intellectuals attempted to articulate since 1955, when less derogatory views on this popular phenomenon proliferated, from Gino Germani's sociological works to Arturo Jauretche's pro-Peronist analyses. Carlos Altamirano, '¿Qué hacer con las masas?', in *La batalla de las ideas*, ed. by Beatriz Sarlo (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2001), pp. 23-55.

did intellectuals alter ideological and political positions in these years, but the traditional subject of analysis with regard to this question, namely the ‘pueblo’, and most of the representations associated with that term, were also significantly transformed.

Following Masiello’s synthesis of these debates, intellectuals had generally inserted themselves into two different projects that entailed contrasting points of view on the popular subject: ‘one tied to a desired restoration of genealogical lines that might link them to a global elite, the other devoted to the marking of national difference through the figure of the popular subject.’<sup>64</sup> As examined at the beginning of this thesis, the Argentine intellectual field until the 1960s had predominantly embraced the former point of view, while after this date, intellectuals – influenced by cultural modernisation, revolutionary movements elsewhere in Latin America, and the expansion of Marxism – leaned towards an anti-liberal project, which in many cases resulted in the revalorisation of the popular subject and Peronism.

As Altamirano argued in a fundamental text about intellectual approaches to the popular subject in Argentina, liberalism became in the 1960s and 1970s ‘una ideología a destiempo, en minoría no solo en la izquierda, sino en el conjunto de la opinión pública’.<sup>65</sup> Increasingly, the traditional elites were considered European-oriented and aligned with imperialism, while the popular, the national, the Latin American subject became a focus of attention for young intellectuals in the 1960s. As the national left was gaining momentum during these years, Peronism was now seen an alternative program against that of the elites, and therefore revalorised by many intellectuals.<sup>66</sup> Even those leftist intellectuals who opposed Peronism, did it with arguments that were opposite to the arguments of liberal elites, as they did not criticise Peronism for its authoritarian and populist features, but for its distance from revolutionary movements.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Masiello, *The Art of Transition*, p. 28.

<sup>65</sup> Altamirano, ‘¿Qué hacer con las masas?’, p. 52.

<sup>66</sup> Masiello acknowledges this particularity of Argentina’s case, where ‘lo popular responded to other callings, notably the Peronist legacy, which had dominated a nationalist imaginary since the 1940s; against this tradition or in its favour, intellectuals saw popular resistance as a sign of revolutionary practice and nationalist fervour.’ Masiello, *The Art of Transition*, p. 29.

<sup>67</sup> A study of the historical relations between the left and Peronism in Argentina is Carlos Altamirano, *Peronismo y cultura de izquierda* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2011). Beginning with the reaction of the Socialist, Communist and Radical Parties to the emergence of Peronism in the 1940s, Altamirano traces the

In Chapter 1, I showed how the Punto de Vista group was influenced by this cultural climate, in which the Argentine new left arose. Not all groupings were the same, and it would certainly be incorrect to consider the intellectuals gathered around *Punto de Vista* as aligned with Peronist-nationalist thought. However, the debate about popular culture was inevitably intermingled with the questions of Peronism and nationalism, insofar as, since the emergence of Peronism in the 1940s, popular culture became indelibly associated with the figure of Perón. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 highlighted the conflicts that the intellectuals around *Punto de Vista* faced regarding the popular subject. In particular, the political activism of Piglia, Sarlo and Altamirano during the period of *Los Libros* had led them to privilege political concerns over intellectual ones. Still attached to the prevailing rhetoric of the Argentine new left, Altamirano and Sarlo supported Isabel Perón's government, which was seen as the only anti-imperialist alternative of the day. In 1976, after the coup was launched, they retreated from the political arena, and focused their intellectual efforts on cultural analysis and historical issues, as the first issues of *Punto de Vista* showed.

The question about popular culture, nationalism and Peronism was still an attractive subject of intellectual deliberation, and *Punto de Vista* published a number of articles throughout its history about these topics. However, it must be stated that the magazine consistently rejected any form of populism or nationalism, a tendency which was manifest in the case of the Falklands/Malvinas War, when Sarlo and Altamirano harshly condemned the standpoint adopted by friends and colleagues from the intellectual field. It was during the 1982 war that many leftist intellectuals set out to defend a cause that was seen as popular, and therefore, as a mandatory commitment, a standpoint *Punto de Vista* explicitly criticised (see Chapter 3).

Overall, it can be argued that after the transition the Punto de Vista group only set out to analyse popular culture as a matter of intellectual debate, and therefore established a distance between the subject matter and the intellectual perspective with which the

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shifts of the left towards it. He identifies a turning point in the year 1955, when Perón was ousted by the military coup, which paved the way for the emergence of the Argentine new left and left-Peronism.

subject was approached.<sup>68</sup> Magazines such as *Crisis*, which was re launched in 1986, provides a contrast with *Punto de Vista*; in *Crisis* one could find articles about rock music, with testimonies of rock musicians such as Luis Alberto Spinetta or Lito Nebbia, or essays about women and advertisements next to an essay by David Viñas or a poem by Borges. Such ‘common’ cultural materials were never presented in *Punto de Vista*, because the magazine maintained a distance with expressions of popular culture, as the article on rock music by Pablo Vila in issue 30 exemplifies.<sup>69</sup>

A layer of complexity was added to the matter of popular culture in this fourth period (1987-1993). In these years, Argentina’s cultural landscape was transformed as economic globalisation created a new cultural order which modified contents and erased cultural frontiers.<sup>70</sup> García Canclini has explained these changes as the move from traditional and modern culture to transnational and postmodern one.<sup>71</sup> This coincided with the arrival of Menem’s neoliberal regime, which re-distributed the alliances and disputes within the intellectual left.<sup>72</sup> If at the beginning of this process, *Punto de Vista* advocated the valorisation of specific areas of popular culture, once neoliberalism was consolidated, their vision would become more pessimistic. That is to say, again with Masiello, that the long-term debate about popular classes and popular culture within the Argentine intellectual field was re-launched during this period under a new form, highly influenced by the significant transformations of popular culture that were characteristic of the 1990s. At the core of the debate regarding popular culture, I argue, was the question of value and the ability to make distinctions in the new cultural landscape.

Early in Menem’s presidency, *Punto de Vista*, mainly through Sarlo’s articles, criticised the changes in popular culture within the city. In ‘Lo popular en la historia de la cultura’, published in issue 35, she analysed the latest cultural shifts of urban popular

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<sup>68</sup> ‘*Punto de Vista* siempre tuvo un horror a cualquier punto de vista que pudiera parecerse al populismo. Creo que el primer número tenía un texto muy bueno sobre milenarismo en Tandil. En todo caso, ¿qué otra cosa sino un tema intelectual podría ser lo popular?’ Correspondence with Daniel Link (March 2017).

<sup>69</sup> See footnote 10 in Chapter 5.

<sup>70</sup> Saítta, p. 250.

<sup>71</sup> Néstor García Canclini, *La globalización imaginada* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2001).

<sup>72</sup> Masiello has pointed out that ‘in the closing years of the twentieth century, with neoliberal regimes everywhere affecting our sense of culture, the relationship between intellectuals and popular subjects, so basic to Latin American theory, shows signs of stress and wear.’ Masiello, *The Art of Transition*, p. 30.



classes while she also claimed that the study of urban popular culture required distinctions. Sarlo demanded the differentiation of cultural products: ‘Todo es cultura, lo sabemos, pero en algunos de sus productos el investigador encontrará una condensación significativa, simbólica y de valores más intensa que otra.’<sup>73</sup> This article was prescriptive, as it did not provide an example of cultural analysis but it suggested what the cultural analyst should do, namely to differentiate what is worthy of analysis and what is not. But Sarlo’s belief that it was possible to study popular culture in a productive way in this article, would change throughout the years. And although she has put forward ways of analysing popular culture, her assessment of the Argentine cultural landscape became more pessimistic, while her defence of aesthetic values more notorious.

This stance was very explicitly conveyed in *Escenas de la vida posmoderna*, her book from 1994, where Sarlo described common scenes of everyday life of Buenos Aires, and focused on the cultural consumerism of popular classes: from the shopping centre to conversations about cosmetic surgery, from the culture of zapping to the habits of young people. Although the book did not necessarily reject the new configurations of popular culture in the postmodern era, it certainly distrusted the value of such new configurations, as a certain nostalgia on modernity and vanguard movements from the 1960s can be appreciated in its pages. In regards to this view of postmodernism, George Yúdice has claimed that Latin American intellectuals have oscillated between a ‘pessimistic Adornian reaction to mass culture’ and a celebration of new cultural products in the postmodern era, placing Sarlo in the former group.<sup>74</sup>

Once again, the discussion was centred on the question of the value of a work of art, very much present in the magazine during these years. In the same issue 35, Raúl Beceyro analysed Argentine cinema stemming from Adorno’s criticism on the cultural industry set forth in his *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Although the connections between Argentine cinema and Adorno’s theories were not articulated sufficiently by Beceyro, it is interesting to notice that he aimed to trace some distinctions regarding what can be considered quality cinema, as he claimed – or rather demanded – the making of distinctions:

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<sup>73</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, ‘Lo popular en la historia de la cultura’, *Punto de Vista*, no. 35 (September-November 1989), 19-24 (p. 24).

<sup>74</sup> Yúdice, p. 164.

Se pueden tener como referencias cinematográficas, por ejemplo a John Cassavetes o a Ettore Scola. No me parece probable que se tenga a los dos como referencias, al mismo tiempo; tampoco me parece saludable [...]. Los modelos de narrador argentino podrán ser Asís o Saer. Se podrán tener como modelos de narradores a García Márquez o a Musil. No es lo mismo.<sup>75</sup>

Although Beceyro's words do not advance an explicit valorisation of writers, it can be guessed that the magazine would prefer Saer over Asís or Musil over García Márquez.

The defence of the value of a work of art was perhaps best expressed in Sarlo's text, 'Cultural studies and literary criticism at the crossroads of value', from 1999. Although this text was published years after the last instalment of *Punto de Vista* analysed in this thesis, it is a fundamental piece on the matter. In this text, Sarlo insisted on the idea that intellectuals should not abandon the characterisation that certain manifestations of culture are more valuable than others, as she claimed that:

We should recognize openly that literature is valuable not because texts are all the same and can all be explained culturally but rather because the contrary is true: because they are different and they resist an unlimited sociocultural interpretation.<sup>76</sup>

Explicitly adopting an anti-relativist stance, Sarlo claimed the right of the intellectual to make distinctions in culture:

If we cannot see a difference between Silvina Ocampo and Laura Esquivel, we will be mistaken [...]. Silvina Ocampo is different from Laura Esquivel even if one admits that Esquivel's ideas about women are 'politically correct'. They are different because there is an 'extra' in Ocampo that is totally absent in Esquivel. Art is about this something extra. And the social importance of a work of art, in a historical perspective, depends on this something extra, as it also depends on its public if we consider it only in terms of its present impact (or only in terms of the market). Sometimes I have the impression that the canon of cultural studies is established by the market, which is no better an authority than that of an elitist academic.<sup>77</sup>

Although Sarlo claimed that market authority is no better than academic authority, the quotation rather suggests that the market is not a good or desirable arbiter of art at all. This text synthesises many of the discussions regarding the value of the work of art held in the magazine through texts by Sarlo, Beceyro, María Teresa Gramuglio throughout this

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<sup>75</sup> Raúl Beceyro, 'Adorno y el cine', *Punto de Vista*, no. 35 (September-November 1989), 4-6 (p. 6).

<sup>76</sup> Sarlo, 'Cultural studies and literary criticism at the crossroads of values', p. 119.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

period.

Another aspect of the quote deserves commentary: the criticism of cultural studies. In her article, Sarlo criticises the state of cultural studies at the turn of the century, and its adoption of relativism when it comes to the interpretation of cultural expressions. Paradoxically, cultural studies had been introduced in Argentina by *Punto de Vista* as a reaction to the widespread influence of structuralism, and as a theoretical frame with which to consider the contextual facts that made the work of art significant (see Chapter 2). A couple of decades later the terms of the discussion had changed and Sarlo's position was defensive: value had to be saved from the trap of multiculturalism and radical relativism that cultural studies had fallen into. As she would argue in her text in *Punto de Vista* 47, 'Arcaicos o marginales':

La época es democratista y populista: el interés y el gusto subjetivo ya no son razones que deban cruzarse en el espacio de un discurso que se proponga convertirlos en universales y enfrentarlos con otros gustos e intereses.<sup>78</sup>

In this context, the market defined the cultural taste of consumers, and now artists and experts were seen as superfluous. Sarlo conveyed a certain melancholic viewpoint in this text, where she recalled the times when Ford, Ozu, Hitchcock and Wyler were filmmakers who were both popular and refined. '¿Que permitía que fueran comprendidos por un público de masas?' she asked.<sup>79</sup> Her answer was that, on the one hand, the cultural industry had not completed its conquest of previous cultural productions. On the other hand, the artistic avant-garde had not yet reached a final point, a viewpoint that resembled Habermas' idea of modernity as an incomplete project.<sup>80</sup>

Another important aspect of Sarlo's critique of the state of culture referred to mass media and politics. It has already been noted that she claimed in issues 32 and 33 that media had to be regulated by the state, but a couple of issues later she wrote a series of articles in which she focused on the relation between the mass media and politics. The first text of this series was a comparison of political campaigns in Argentina, Brazil and Peru, which highlighted and criticised the media strategies adopted by the candidates:

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<sup>78</sup> Sarlo, '¿Arcaicos o marginales?', p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Menem in Argentina, Collor de Melo in Brazil and Fujimori in Peru. The article could not avoid mentioning, not without irony, Mario Vargas Llosa's campaign in Perú, as the Nobel Laureate in Literature competed against Fujimori for President in 1990. Sarlo offered a critical view of Vargas Llosa's political campaign:

En la misma ciudad de Lima, Mario Vargas Llosa, que quiere parecerse a un intelectual cuyos principios morales lo impulsan a la acción política, posaba para una foto en el fondo de su casa. Los encargados de tomarla habían ocultado la piscina con una parecita de cartón y lata, contra la cual dispusieron a algunos pobres, aindiados y mal vestidos, un chico con la cara sucia y otros elementos de utilería. El tema de la foto era la visita del candidato a una villa miseria. Todo como le hubiera gustado a Hollywood de la edad de oro, reconstruido en estudio.<sup>81</sup>

In a writing style distant from earlier texts – less formal and more attentive to the materiality of certain cultural expressions (e.g. the description of Vargas Llosa's picture) – Sarlo denounced the adoption of simulation in politics. She was foreseeing, but also strongly opposing, the new strategies of marketing and spectacle in politics which she called 'post-politics'.<sup>82</sup> In her view, this new kind of politics categorically expelled intellectuals from public space, as 'la post-política técnica no necesita a los intelectuales que, como categoría, pierden el espacio público donde surgieron históricamente.'<sup>83</sup> The appraisal, in aesthetic terms, of new forms of politics was also expressed in Sarlo's text on Menem in issue 39, in which she overtly condemned the President's cynicism and banality.<sup>84</sup>

Sarlo's critique of post-politics was also advanced in issue 40, an issue dedicated almost entirely to the Gulf War, which included many articles by several world-renowned intellectuals who were either for or against the intervention of the United States in the Persian Gulf.<sup>85</sup> Sarlo's text, rather than being concerned about the specifics of the War,

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<sup>81</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, 'Basuras culturales, simulacros políticos', *Punto de Vista*, no. 37 (July 1990), 14-17 (p. 14).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> See Beatriz Sarlo, 'Menem'.

<sup>85</sup> Issue 40 included a statement against the Gulf War signed by E. Balibar, T. Ben Jelloun, P. Bourdieu, S. Breton, M. Harbí, A. Laabi, E. Terray, K. Titous, and a statement for the war signed by A. Finkelkraut, F. De Fontenay, J. F. Lyotard, J. Rogozinski, K. Ryjk, D. Sallenave, P. A. Taguiell, A. Touraine. Additionally,

was centred on the aesthetic aspects of the TV transmissions of the War, which she critically defined as Hollywood-like videos.<sup>86</sup> She also reflected on the role of intellectuals in the midst of the cultural changes at the turn of the century. Recalling Adorno's pessimism on popular cinema and popular music, Sarlo found in the representation of the War a new form of spectacle that was also reproduced in politics:

La obsesión moderna por la distinción entre niveles de representación [...] desaparece porque ya no existen niveles de representación. [...] Transformada en un video-game, la Guerra ofrece los problemas de un video-game.<sup>87</sup>

Although Sarlo tried not to adopt an overtly pessimistic stance, she was rather dismissive of the new configurations of culture and politics at the turn of the century. By this point, Menem had already governed Argentina for more than two years and had installed a political style akin to new mass media representations of politics, which brought with it a relationship with the masses, more direct but also superficial, as it relied on his charisma and the image he created of himself as an exponent of 'new politics'.<sup>88</sup>

As described, a series of changes in popular culture, the cultural industry, mass media and politics became significantly modified within Argentine society after the democratic transition. It was natural, thus, that intellectuals would see themselves in a crisis that was difficult to overcome. Those who edited *Punto de Vista* not only disbelieved in new theories arising in the intellectual field, they were also sceptical about the new cultural relativism according to which every cultural expression was a potential subject of study. The question regarding value, which underlies both the discussions about postmodernism and popular culture, was also linked to the crisis of the profile of intellectuals, which was conveyed in Sarlo's article, 'Arcaicos or marginales':

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the issue reproduced articles on the war by Edward Said, Michael Walzer, Stanley Hoffmann and Anders Stephanson.

<sup>86</sup> Sarlo's focus on the aesthetic and symbolic aspects of the representation of War resembles the more popular essays by Jean Baudrillard on the Gulf War, published in 1991 in the newspapers *Libération* and *The Guardian*. Baudrillard, like Sarlo, analysed the way the war has been presented to viewers across the world through television. However, it does not seem likely that Sarlo read Baudrillard before writing her essay, as she does not quote him.

<sup>87</sup> Beatriz Sarlo, 'La guerra del Golfo: representaciones pospolíticas y análisis cultural', *Punto de Vista*, no. 40 (July-September 1991), 28-31 (p. 29).

<sup>88</sup> Novaro and Palermo, 'Menem', p. 492.

Estamos encerrados en esta doble pinza: hijos de la crisis de las vanguardias, pero, al mismo tiempo, constituidos en ellas; sumergidos en la obscena abundancia comunicativa de la industria cultural, oscilamos entre la tentación (imposible) de convertirla a la religión del arte o destruirla como a un *deus ex machina* infernal, última arma inventada por el capitalismo en su ocupación implacable y progresiva de las dimensiones culturales.<sup>89</sup>

In her 1994 book, *Escenas de la vida posmoderna*, Sarlo exhibited the same preoccupation in similar terms when stating that cultural critique had to ‘librarse del doble encierro de la celebración neopopulista de lo existente y de los prejuicios elitistas que socavan la posibilidad de articular una perspectiva democrática.’<sup>90</sup> For her, if the new cultural configurations that were threatening high culture could not be celebrated by adopting a postmodern and banal relativism, the option of hiding away in an ivory tower was no better.

As Francine Masiello has observed, some advocates of the new left have accused Sarlo of betraying the cause of popular missions because of the defence of aesthetic modernism she set forth in *Punto de Vista* and other writings.<sup>91</sup> Yet, as Masiello argues, ‘it would be too easy to cancel Sarlo’s efforts, to charge her with abandoning faith in the possibility of a public sphere that included popular voices.’<sup>92</sup> Indeed, although *Punto de Vista* was a magazine made by an intellectual elite, their members did not advocate a stratified cultural offer that would conform to class divisions; on the contrary, they advocated for a universalisation of high culture, in the same sense that Habermas indicated in his text ‘Modernity vs. Postmodernity’, as seen above.

#### The crisis of intellectuals, the Club de Cultura Socialista in crisis

In spite of the changes *Punto de Vista* went through in order to maintain a contemporary editorial line, two main features characterised the review throughout its history: its principal interest in culture and the self-definition of its contributors and editors as intellectuals. The latter feature frequently elicited reflections, analyses and discussions

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<sup>89</sup> Sarlo, ‘La guerra del Golfo’, p. 31. (Italics in the original).

<sup>90</sup> Sarlo, *Escenas de la vida posmoderna*, pp. 197-98.

<sup>91</sup> Masiello, *The Art of Transition*, p. 33.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

about the role of intellectuals in society, either from the magazine's editors or from local or foreign contributors. *Punto de Vista* repeatedly revised the figure of the intellectual with regard to the revolutionary past and authoritarian regimes, and in relation to the democratic restoration and the academisation of intellectuals brought about by the modernisation of Argentine universities in the 1980s. At the beginning of this fourth period, the problem of academic hyper-specialisation seemed to be the most urgent threat to the participation of intellectuals in public debates which the editors of *Punto de Vista* sought to preserve. The editorial article in issue 30, for example, rhetorically asked: '¿De qué modo articular intervenciones que desborden los límites académicos [...] para intentar un movimiento expansivo de circulación más democrática de los saberes?'<sup>93</sup> The idea behind this statement was that intellectuals had to intervene in general debates and address audiences wider than those from universities. However, in a later instalment, the much stronger characterisation of crisis of intellectuals appeared. As an example, the obituary in memory of Aricó published in the first page of issue 41 acknowledged the crisis of intellectuals and exhorted them to endure the intellectual enterprise that Aricó had set forth, stating that 'la tenacidad de sus convicciones y el modo en que las transformaba en saber están allí como una prueba de que sigue siendo posible pensar, organizar, actuar aun en los tiempos más oscuros.'<sup>94</sup>

Two years later, Sarlo's article '¿Arcaicos o marginales?' published in issue 47 conveyed a much more pessimistic idea about the role of intellectuals. She concluded that intellectuals were succumbing to academisation and that 'cada grupo habla de sí y para sí'.<sup>95</sup> What had happened between 1987 and 1993 that worsened the expectations intellectuals had of their role within society? And, what made them characterise the new situation as critical?

A series of changes in the cultural and political context, along with the advent of postmodern currents of thought and the specialisation of knowledge, affected the role of intellectuals and their self-perception as the main actors within the cultural field. Arguably, this marks the end of a trajectory for the *Punto de Vista* group, a trajectory

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<sup>93</sup> *Punto de Vista*, 'Editorial. Décimo año', p. 2.

<sup>94</sup> *Punto de Vista*, 'En memoria de José Aricó', *Punto de Vista*, no. 41 (December 1991), 1-2 (p. 2).

<sup>95</sup> Sarlo, '¿Arcaicos o marginales?', p. 4.

which had led them to embrace the idea of revolution in the 1960s and, later, the idea of democratic socialism in the 1980s. In both projects, intellectuals had a social function as educators of non-intellectual others, ultimately providing meaning to the intellectual enterprise. Towards the mid-1990s, politics and society had changed so much that it seemed that intellectual discourse was increasingly becoming meaningless for most people.

The hyper-specialisation of scholars and their confinement to academic institutions affected the role of intellectuals and their self-perception as global interpreters of society. Zygmunt Bauman has characterised this change as the transit from the predominance of intellectuals as ‘legislators’ in modern societies, to the predominance of intellectuals as ‘interpreters’ in postmodern societies.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, Roxana Patiño has argued that the aftermath of the democratic transition saw the end of ‘el intelectual como portavoz de las grandes síntesis ideológico-políticas, como portavoz de un sentido de la historia.’<sup>97</sup> In the above-mentioned article, Sarlo explicitly denounced intellectuals who abandoned their social function, as they adopted the persona of the expert:

En su figura técnica, aquellos que fueron intelectuales hoy son expertos: no sólo su saber se ha particularizado (y esto es inevitable si se piensa en la complejidad exigida por cualquier intervención en las sociedades contemporáneas), sino que su moral también es particularista. Los lazos que unían al intelectual con la sociedad pertenecen a un imaginario en vías de extinción, al que se reemplaza por el de un territorio perfectamente limitado donde el experto llega con su *expertise*. [...] Cuando la especificidad es el eje dominante de las intervenciones, lo que no es específico queda entregado al dominio del gusto, de la opinión y del interés. De éstos se piensa (erróneamente) que no necesitan una fundación discursiva.<sup>98</sup>

This time, Sarlo defended the intellectual figure, not against cultural relativism but against the expert. While Sarlo was writing these words, a new model of university graduate was emerging. Increasingly, to hold a PhD was a basic requirement in order to become a

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<sup>96</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Postmodernity, and Intellectuals* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1987). Bauman identifies a type of intellectual in the twentieth century tied to a modern tradition, the ‘legislators’, who allegedly assign themselves a guiding role in respect to the masses. In contrast, the ‘interpreters’, who emerged in the late twentieth century with postmodernism, aim to provide a more specific, more relative and subjective discourse.

<sup>97</sup> Patiño, *Narrativas políticas e identidades intelectuales*, p. 5.

<sup>98</sup> Sarlo, ‘¿Arcaicos o marginales?’, p. 5. (Italics in the original).



researcher, which contrasted with the situation of intellectuals who had entered academic institutions from 1983 onwards. As seen in previous chapters, Aricó, Sarlo, Altamirano, Gramuglio and Vezzetti became senior researchers at CONICET after the democratic transition without holding, for example, a PhD. In parallel, new postgraduate degrees and areas of study aligned with the multiplication of a more specialised academic profile in Argentina, due to the modernisation of institutions brought about by the reforms of the post-dictatorship. New institutions, research bodies, and specialised journals absorbed a large part of the intellectual work of Argentine researchers, and although most members of *Punto de Vista* participated in academic institutions and produced specialised papers and articles, the magazine as such aimed to challenge the institutionalisation of intellectuals.

Moreover, underpinning questions regarding the end of global interpretations was the debate on modernism, postmodernism and mass culture analysed above. Regardless of the fact that no other magazine introduced these issues with the depth and sophistication exhibited in the pages of *Punto de Vista*, its editors, and especially Beatriz Sarlo, adopted a point of view that was more nostalgic of modernity than celebratory of a postmodernism they understood in a Habermasian sense. New configurations in the cultural field and mass media were instead analysed with scepticism and pessimism in the pages of the magazine.

The idea that the magazine defended modern values, as Sarlo argued in her final editorial article in issue 90 (April 2008), does not imply that *Punto de Vista* did not renovate itself in the years to follow, or that it remained an outdated publication. What I argue is that the magazine adopted a defensive position as a modern publication in the midst of a postmodern cultural climate, and that for many years both currents – the modern and the postmodern – coincided within the field of little reviews in Argentina, at least until 2008, when *Punto de Vista* was last published. Sarlo's text in issue 47 was clearly derogatory of the new configuration of intellectual tasks, leading to a pessimistic view about contemporary Argentina. In her view, the situation was grave and discouraging, and the intellectual discourse was trapped in a conundrum, namely either to succumb to the dictates of public opinion and mass media format or have no interlocutor whatsoever:

Como nadie quiere reconocerse en el lugar del utopista ni del profeta, el discurso de los intelectuales pierde filo crítico y, por este camino, bajo la apariencia de volverse más humilde y democrático, llega en verdad a ser más

concesivo con el poder y, al mismo tiempo, practicar el seguidismo de la opinión pública. Arribamos así a una especie de *neopopulismo intelectual* que, a diferencia de los viejos populismos, no reconoce dos viejos conceptos movilizadores: el pueblo y la nación. Si la quiebra histórica de estos conceptos dejó a los intelectuales en disponibilidad para someterse a crítica, ello no debió necesariamente significar que las ideas globales, fundadas en valores, debían expulsarse para siempre. En la Argentina, este neo-populismo sin pueblo y sin nación, ideología construida sobre el sentido común, el individualismo, el seguidismo de las tendencias privatizadoras de los asuntos públicos, la resignación del espíritu crítico [...] produce indiferentismo ético y estético, oportunismo frente a las mayorías de opinión construidas en los medios y respeto del sentido común como si este valiera más que las ideas que lo contradicen.<sup>99</sup>

Sarlo's words convey, to a great extent, the different aspects of the new postmodern context that was seen as problematic for the Punto de Vista group: the crisis of aesthetic and ethical values, the increasing influence of the market in culture and media, and the importance given to common sense over expert knowledge.

Moreover, the crisis experienced within the CCS in these same years was perhaps the most immediate and evident materialisation of the crisis of intellectuals. As already noted, in August 1991, Aricó, main leader and founder of the CCS, died. His absence left a lack of leadership that other members of the Club could not fulfil adequately, which led some founding members to distance themselves from the Club. Described as an intellectual with the capacity to reconcile different positions and opinions, Aricó had gathered around the CCS a considerable group of intellectuals who were eager to get involved in public debates from renewed ideological viewpoints, aligned with social democracy (see Chapter 4).<sup>100</sup> Although the CCS sought to maintain a political openness that traditional leftist parties had lacked in the past, the CCS could not constitute itself as a main actor within politics in Argentina for two main reasons.

Firstly, the CCS was essentially an intellectual enterprise, and since Menem's victory in 1989, intellectuals had never been so distanced from decision-making spheres.<sup>101</sup> In this regard, Menem was the opposite of Alfonsín and represented the less

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<sup>99</sup> Sarlo, '¿Arcaicos o marginales?', p. 5. (Italics in the original).

<sup>100</sup> 'El Club *era* Pancho. En los lugares en que Pancho era organizador era a la vez jefe'. Mocca, p. 108. (Italics in the original). Alberto Díaz, member of the Club, also characterised Aricó as the 'integrador' of the Club. Interview with Alberto Díaz (Buenos Aires, 5 May 2017).

<sup>101</sup> See for example, Marcos Novaro, 'Menemismo, pragmatismo y romanticismo', in *La historia reciente*, ed. by Novaro and Palermo, pp. 199-221. Novaro argues that intellectuals remained markedly distant from

attractive option within Peronism. Although in his presidential campaign he made use of Peronist rhetoric and its three main slogans – political sovereignty, economic independence and social justice – as President, he carried out a series of neoliberal reforms which involved the privatisation of national companies, the liberalisation of the economy, and the increase of labour flexibility.<sup>102</sup> The other group within Peronism, much closer in ideological terms to the CCS, was ‘peronismo renovador’, led by Antonio Cafiero and Carlo ‘Chacho’ Álvarez. The group lost the primaries against Menem in 1989, and thereafter some of its members established a fluent conversation with the CCS. For example, Carlos ‘Chacho’ Álvarez, who was also editor of *Unidos* magazine, became a frequent guest in the CCS’s discussions.<sup>103</sup> However, the best years of the CCS had long passed. According to former members, it was during the democratic transition that the Club was most dynamic, vibrant and visible.<sup>104</sup>

Secondly, another failure the Club faced in constituting itself as a political actor was that it did not reach younger generations. Although the CCS successfully incorporated a number of young people, such as Adrián Gorelik, it was unable to attract a large number of followers. The CCS depended much on its founders, as it had been built upon the ideological affinities of a generation of people who had gone through similar experiences in the years surrounding the dictatorship, a birthmark that tied the group together. According to some of its former members, the CCS was a group of friends who met weekly to discuss politics, rather than the political organisation they originally planned it

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Menem, especially in the light of the close relationship they established with Alfonsín, or the ‘peronismo renovador’. However, Novaro argues, Menem’s pragmatist government did establish a fluent communication with one sector of the Argentine intelligentsia: economists.

<sup>102</sup> At the beginning of the 1980s, 8.3% of the Argentine population was below the poverty line, while in 2001, two years after Menem left office, 35.4% of Argentines were poor. Also, the unemployment rate grew from 5.3% in the period 1981-1985 to 14.9% in the period 1996-2000. Mario Damill, ‘La economía y la política económica: del viaje al Nuevo endeudamiento’ in *Nueva Historia Argentina*, Vol. 10: *Dictadura y Democracia (1976-2001)*, ed. by Juan Suriano (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2005), pp. 115-223.

<sup>103</sup> The series of exchanges between these *peronistas* and the Club would later crystallize in the experience of Frepaso and some years after, in the Alianza, towards the end of the 1990s. Both the Frepaso and the Alianza were political parties that brought together sectors from Peronism, the UCR and socialism, which challenged the neoliberal project incarnated by Menem and the widespread corruption that he had installed since his first presidency. This was the last political experience some members of the Club embarked in organically. See Roniger, p. 148.

<sup>104</sup> Hora and Trímboli, ‘Beatriz Sarlo’ [Interview], p. 193.

to be.<sup>105</sup> After Aricó passed away, it became evident that some of the original goals the CCS had set remained unfulfilled and nothing but a radical re-structuration of its dynamics would amend that problem. The crisis experienced in the CCS crystallised in May 1993, when Altamirano resigned as president of the Club. In his resignation statement Altamirano explained some of the reasons of this crisis:

Creo que el Club está en una crisis [...]. Todos sabemos que nuestra institución nació bajo el impulso de una doble esperanza: la del alfonsinismo, en el plano nacional, la de la socialdemocracia, en el plano internacional. Todos sabemos, también, que esos dos puntos de referencia han perdido fuerza [...] De ahí que se vea el Club en una crisis de identidad y de sentido.<sup>106</sup>

Altamirano's words convey the signs of a wearing down of the 'primavera alfonsinista', but they also convey the disenchantment he felt with regard to the role of the intellectual in the new context. In this statement, Altamirano also acknowledged the group's sectarianism, by arguing that many decisions were taken in the 'segundo local del Club, que es el restaurant de Riobamba y Bartolomé Mitre', referring to the customary dinners that followed the weekly meetings at the CCS.<sup>107</sup>

In the midst of the disputes around the identity of the CCS Sarlo proposed a re-structuring of its internal functioning. The CCS's assembly rejected the proposal, and in June 1993 Sarlo decided to withdraw her affiliation, along with Hugo Vezzetti and Rafael Filippelli. In her statement, Sarlo presented some of her reasons in leaving the CCS:

Varias veces, a lo largo de estos nueve años, traté de intervenir para que el Club cambiara. Fracagé. Debí saber que una 'estructura de sentimiento' no se altera tan fácilmente. [...] ¿Por qué no permanezco en el Club para colaborar en las transformaciones indispensables? Porque no me siento afín a su estilo [...] al tono general de las relaciones que definen, más que una institución, un conglomerado fuertemente hundido en la afectividad.<sup>108</sup>

According to Sarlo's proposal and the testimonies of other members of the Club, she sought to give the Club a more political impetus, less attached to the personal relationships

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with Alberto Díaz (Buenos Aires, 5 May 2017). Interview with and with Sergio Bufano (Buenos Aires, 21 March 2017).

<sup>106</sup> Transcription of reunion 23 May 1993. Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas, Fondo Club de Cultura Socialista.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

that, since its origins, had constituted it.<sup>109</sup> In the beginning, the idea of the CCS as a political project had been stronger, but now, with Menem as President and the reconfiguration of media and culture, what more visibly prevailed was the personal affinities of the CCS's members.

Although other members of *Punto de Vista* remained affiliated to the CCS, in the cases of Altamirano, Sabato, Gramuglio and Portantiero, Sarlo's departure suggested a division of preferences and personal affinities that, nevertheless, would not interrupt the development of *Punto de Vista* until the following decade. Both the magazine and the CCS maintained their normal functioning in spite of the division of the founding group, although, at least in the case of the CCS, it was clear that the best days were over. Progressively, the role intellectuals assigned to themselves throughout the twentieth century had markedly changed. Intellectuals, if not completely ousted, certainly lost the centrality they once had.

### Conclusion

This last chapter, which focuses on the period of *Punto de Vista* from 1987 to 1993, covering issues 30 to 47, analysed three main strands developed by the magazine in these years: the debate on postmodernism and the crisis of modernity, the situation of popular culture in Argentina, and the crisis of intellectuals. Although these strands were analysed separately for analytical purposes, they were closely intertwined, as many articles in *Punto de Vista* conveyed, in particular those authored by the editors. In some of these texts, postmodernism was associated with a decadent cultural landscape and with the emergence of a new form of mass culture that was far from the more modern aesthetic and political values the intellectuals of *Punto de Vista* ascribed to. The crisis that the group envisaged was, mainly, a crisis of values, and of the possibility of establishing distinctions in cultural production, politics, and mass culture. This crisis was also lived as a crisis of intellectuals, insofar as the academic hyper-specialisation confined experts to their own

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<sup>109</sup> Hora and Trímboli, 'Beatriz Sarlo' [Interview], p. 193.

disciplines, pushing them away from the public sphere, where intellectual discourses were traditionally put into practice.

Moreover, the sense of crisis was accompanied by the local political context, marked by the election of Carlos Menem as President. Not only did Menem replace Alfonsín, a political figure who had been explicitly supported by the intellectuals in *Punto de Vista* and the CCS, but he also set forth a political style that was opposite to what the *Punto de Vista* group valued in a political figure. The series of cultural and political changes in Argentina created a climate of pessimism amongst intellectuals, which resounded in the CCS as some members of *Punto de Vista* decided to distance themselves from the CCS in 1993. Although this distancing did not disrupt the magazine, it marked it significantly, as Sarlo has acknowledged when giving an account of the incorporation of Gorelik to the editorial board:

Carlos [Altamirano] vino a Córdoba, porque esas cosas así de fondo yo las discutía con Carlos, se quedó una semana y yo le dije: ‘mira, yo creo que yo necesito a alguien en la revista, que no tiene que ser de la revista, porque ninguno de la revista puede tomar ese lugar y yo creo que esa persona es Adrián.’ Y Carlos estuvo de acuerdo. [Pero] después ahí ya *Punto de Vista* tiene los líos que tuvo. Vezzetti, Adrián y yo nos fuimos del Club y todo empezó a tener fisuras, que no alcanzaron a fisurar la revista, pero que quedaron marcadas internamente.<sup>110</sup>

Even if there was a personal dimension to this break from the year 1993, the fact is that the changes in the local and international context, in political terms, but also in intellectual ones, framed the fading of the *Punto de Vista* project as it was conceived in the early 1980s.

Thus, issue 47 is the finishing point of this study. Indeed, *Punto de Vista* could be studied in its entire history, until its final issue, published in 2008. Nevertheless, if we take into account that 1993 – with the split within the CCS and the article published in issue 47 by Sarlo – marks the definite end of the project set forth in the democratic transition, then the end date of the analysis makes sense. That project, although radically different from that of the early 1970s, was nevertheless based on the idea of change and future progress. These utopias, different in content but similar inasmuch as they envisioned a better future society, gave sense to the intellectual enterprise, as we have

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<sup>110</sup> Interview with Beatriz Sarlo (Buenos Aires, 6 March 2017).

explored in previous chapters. By 1993, it seemed that there was no longer a place for utopias. Postmodernism entailed a dispersion of meaning and of unifying concepts upon which to cement the political-intellectual tasks.



*Figure 15. Editors of Punto de Vista. From left to right: Carlos Altamirano, Beatriz Sarlo, Adrián Gorelik, Hugo Vezzetti, and Hilda Sabato in the early 2000s.*

## Conclusion

Los cambios de *Punto de Vista* durante las últimas tres décadas son parte de la historia del progresismo argentino (aunque muchas veces, quienes sintieron antipatía o se diferenciaron de la revista pusieran en cuestión que ella permaneciera como miembro pleno de esa franja).<sup>1</sup>

This thesis examined the history of *Punto de Vista*, from the years prior to its foundation in 1978, to the year 1993, through which forty-seven issues were published. After 1993, the magazine continued for another fifteen years, until 2008, when *Punto de Vista* celebrated its thirtieth anniversary with the publication of its last, ninetieth, issue. During its final years, *Punto de Vista* maintained its focus on literature, by selecting and commenting on contemporary literary works that were distant from market-trends. Although Argentine literature always occupied a privileged space in the pages of the magazine, foreign literature was also a subject of analysis and *Punto de Vista* played an important role, for example, in the reception of the German writer G. W. Sebald in Argentina.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, politics continued being an important subject of debate for the magazine and issues 50 to 90 usually included commentaries on mid-term and presidential elections celebrated between 1994 and 2008. Issue 52, for example, contained an evaluation of Menem's second victory in the 1995 elections by Carlos Altamirano and José Nun, while issue 61 (1998) included an exchange of ideas among the members of the magazine about the political context. This round table in issue 61 mostly focused on the evaluation of the new political coalition between the centre-left and the Radical Party, the Alianza, which would come into power in 1999. Some members of *Punto de Vista*, such as Sarlo, had engaged in the political campaign of a leading figure in this coalition, Graciela Fernández Meijide, in the previous years. However, as the editors expressed in the discussion, the Alianza as such was not showing the political strength required for offering a solution to the urgent social and economic problems inherited from the Menem

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<sup>1</sup> Sarlo, 'Final', p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



era. Ultimately, the inclusion of political commentaries in these issues shows the extent to which *Punto de Vista* remained faithful to its original interest in politics and culture, as the editors expressed in issue 61: '*Punto de Vista* había tratado de opinar siempre, de manera simultánea e igualmente intensa, sobre cuestiones culturales y políticas.'<sup>3</sup>

The magazine further developed the new tendencies it had adopted during the last period analysed in this thesis, such as urban and media studies. Between issues 48 to 90 cinema, visual arts and music were central topics of interest for the magazine, and these subjects were usually analysed by a new group of contributors. Adrián Gorelik, Ana Porrúa, Federico Monjeau, Rafael Filippelli were some of the new names that appeared more frequently during the last years of the magazine, and they all became staff members in 2004, after Altamirano, Gramuglio and Sabato left the review. This replacement ultimately entailed a break in the habitual cohesion of the magazine, which Daniel Link sharply foresaw in an article about *Punto de Vista*, in which he referred to a 'división del Uno' in the magazine.<sup>4</sup> With the new editorial staff, *Punto de Vista* would endure for only four more years.

Towards 2008, the magazine began to lose some of the impulse that had traditionally characterised it. Sarlo, who undoubtedly imprinted her own personal mark on the magazine, wrote an emotive essay for the last issue in which she acknowledged that 'algo ha comenzado a fallar y es mejor reconocerlo ahora, cuando no se ven consecuencias, que en un capítulo decadente', while also claiming that a long-lived magazine such as *Punto de Vista* did not deserve to be printed only by inertia.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, no other Argentine magazine of the kind, except for *Sur*, had been published for so many consecutive years while also maintaining a decisive influence on the local cultural and intellectual fields. For Daniel Link, a close follower of *Punto de Vista*, the exhaustion of the magazine was not so much related to the weariness of the publication itself, but to new forms of communication that competed with the printed format of the magazine:

Creo que tiene que ver con que Internet generó formas de intervención que competían con *Punto de Vista*. El punto de inflexión fue la crisis de 2001,

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<sup>3</sup> Carlos Altamirano and others, 'Debate sobre política e ideas', *Punto de Vista*, no. 61 (August 1998), 18-30 (p. 18).

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Link, '*Punto de Vista*, bodas de plata', *Radar/En el quisco*, Página 12, 16 May 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

cuando muchas revistas se pasaron a lo virtual. De todos modos creo que *Punto de Vista* era el último grupo intelectual, lo cual en sí mismo era un anacronismo.<sup>6</sup>

Link's comment points in two directions: on the one hand, he argues that the end of *Punto de Vista* was to a great extent explained by the decline of the printed format as this was replaced by digital magazines. On the other hand, he argues that the Punto de Vista group was the last intellectual group in Argentina. These two observations are connected.

Firstly, it must be acknowledged that *Punto de Vista* did try to adapt to the new digital era already in 2001, when the magazine launched the website *Bazar Americano*, which would become an online version of *Punto de Vista*, and would allow readers to comment on articles and other discussions that the website would promote.<sup>7</sup> In *Bazar Americano* one can find, for example, the complete digitalised collection of *Punto de Vista* or a section of diary-like entries written by Sarlo. However, the site became completely independent from the Punto de Vista group over the years and now publishes a diversity of articles under the editorship of Ana Porrúa. Moreover, this site remains outdated and marginal in comparison to other digital magazines in Argentina that in recent times have become important spaces of intellectual debate. One of the best examples of the relevance of digital reviews is *Anfibia*, created in 2012 and edited by a group of young writers, under the sponsorship of the University of San Martín.<sup>8</sup>

Under this light, *Punto de Vista* represented one of the last expressions of the little review format that first emerged in Argentina, according to Francine Masiello, in the 1920s, along with the professionalization of the writer.<sup>9</sup> As I have shown, there is a

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<sup>6</sup> Alejandra Rodríguez Ballester, 'La imaginación, ropaje de lo real. Entrevista con Daniel Link', *Revista Ñ, Clarín*, 8 August 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Punto de Vista, 'BazarAmericano, el sitio de *Punto de Vista*', *Punto de Vista*, no. 70 (August 2001), 1. The website is still online, see <<http://bazaramericano.com/>> [accessed 18 June 2018].

<sup>8</sup> See *Anfibia*, 'Qué es *Anfibia*' <<http://www.revistaanfibia.com/que-es-anfibia/>> [accessed 18 June 2018].

<sup>9</sup> 'The rise of literary journalism in Argentina coincided with a broad debate about the professionalization of the writer. The growth of the literary establishment as an autonomous discipline, freed from official functions, promoted a new consciousness concerning the craft of writing in the early decades of the twentieth century. Additionally, art conceived as an independent activity, separate from any obligations to the state, was supported by the rise of literary clubs, guilds, and professional societies. Writers thus joined in fraternity as persons of leisure and apostles of art. These factors also provided the necessary conditions for the rise of the modern Argentine literary review. In this regard, the monumental contributions of *Nosotros* and *Sur* and the avant-garde journals of the 1920s reflected a concerted effort to defend the writers' estate'. Masiello, 'Argentine Literary Journalism', p. 31.

genealogical line that connects intellectual projects in Argentina with magazines: from *Sur* to *Contorno*, from *Contorno* to *Pasado y Presente* and to *Los Libros*, and from *Los Libros* to *Punto de Vista*. And the genealogical line could stretch even further back in time with *Sur*'s predecessors, such as *Nosotros* or *Martín Fierro*, analysed in Masiello's work. Quite possibly, *Punto de Vista* is the last member of a genealogy of Argentine *revistas* that have been, during the twentieth century, privileged vehicles of modernisation and, at the same time, platforms for intellectual alignments.

Secondly, as the last sentence of Link's words convey, *Punto de Vista* represented the last intellectual group in Argentina. This, I argue, should not be understood as the end of intellectual debates or intellectual discourses, but as the decline of a specific kind of agents in the intellectual field – to return to Bourdieu's tenets – namely groups of intellectuals (many times finding their expression or unified voice through magazines). The trajectory followed by this group has been one of the main focuses of this thesis, which accounts for the 1960s and early 1970s, when the group was not yet formed but its members participated as young students in political and intellectual revolts, to the year 1993, when they had already consolidated their position as intellectual figures.

Influenced by a period marked by cultural modernisation in the 1960s, the editors of *Punto de Vista* shaped their cultural taste for avant-garde movements, they absorbed theories coming from France, such as structuralism, psychoanalysis and the Sartrean mandate of political commitment. As many young university students in the 1970s, they engaged in left-wing political parties, swelling the lines of the so-called Argentine new left. These years were marked by the rise of revolutionary utopias and the influence of socialist revolutions around the world. The exacerbation of revolutionary politics in the 1970s led to the worst possible reaction from more conservative sectors of society, principally the military, accustomed, due to Argentina's frail democracy, to imposing authoritarian regimes. The 1976 dictatorship that tragically installed state terrorism in Argentina brought down the political illusions of intellectuals – not only theirs, but of vast politicised sectors of society – to establish an alternative system to capitalism. In the clandestine situation they had suddenly been forced into, the group of intellectuals on which this thesis focused published *Punto de Vista* for the first time in an attempt to resist censorship and the fracturing of the intellectual field. This also marked the identity of the

group, for the magazine was always conceived as an independent publication, an aspect pointed out by Sarlo in her essay in issue 90:

*Punto de Vista* nació como revista marginal, *underground*, opositora, alternativa, lejos de cualquier institución. Eso me marcó para siempre. Nunca, cuando se recuperó la democracia y entramos a la universidad, me sentí del todo en aguas propias. Las únicas aguas que he navegado, durante treinta años, con la certeza de que son mi espacio natural fueron las de esta revista independiente de la academia, de los subsidios, de las editoriales, de los grandes medios, de la vida normalizada y sus servidumbres.<sup>10</sup>

The most important contribution of *Punto de Vista* during the dictatorship was its ability to maintain a space for intellectual reunion. And the most evident example of how successful the magazine was in achieving this goal was the connection its editors established with Argentine intellectuals living in exile, such as Juan Carlos Portantiero and José Aricó. As censorship and repression began to decrease towards 1981, *Punto de Vista* adopted a slightly more politicised stance. The editors never ceased to hold political viewpoints, but these had to be veiled during the first issues as it was already too dangerous to publish the magazine in such risky circumstances.<sup>11</sup> Since 1981, as censorship decreased, *Punto de Vista* disclosed its political views by condemning the dictatorship, opposing the Falklands/Malvinas War against the predominant nationalist discourse fostered by the military, and supporting the democratisation process opened in 1983.

When intellectuals living in Mexico returned to Argentina in the wake of the 1983 elections, they created, along with the *Punto de Vista* group, the Club de Cultura Socialista. Intellectuals had changed, they no longer endorsed revolutionary utopias, and were now advocating less extreme and more measured goals: the consolidation of a stable and enduring democracy that would incorporate demands for social justice, Human Rights, and the modernisation of institutions. However, the intensity with which the intellectuals around the CCS and *Punto de Vista* set forth this democratic project, which

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<sup>10</sup> Sarlo, 'Final', p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> One example of how dangerous was to publish *Punto de Vista* under the dictatorship is an entry of Piglia's diaries from 1978 which claims: 'Encuentro con Beatriz Sarlo en la Biblioteca del Congreso, y luego de una charla breve y nerviosa decidimos volver a casa, seguros de que nuestros amigos nos han mantenido a salvo. De modo que la revista se seguirá publicando.' Piglia, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi*, III, p. 82.

aimed to bring together socialism and liberal principles, reveals the extent to which this new project was lived as a new utopia.

Democracy was the keyword of the period, and great expectations were placed on it, as expressed by President Raúl Alfonsín's phrase 'con la democracia se come, se cura, se educa', which has become indelibly imprinted on Argentine collective memory. In this context, the *Punto de Vista* group set out to explore a series of pressing debates: the revision of Marxism, the articulation of memory in relation to the tragedy of the period 1976-1983, and a re-definition of the role of intellectuals. There were reasons to believe that intellectuals had an important role to play in civic life: President Alfonsín listened to intellectuals, he sought their advice for planning a strategy in relation to retroactive justice, entrusted them the writing of some of his speeches and he was personally engaged with discussions taking place in the intellectual sphere. He even participated in CCS meetings after he stepped down as President.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, intellectuals, and particularly those in *Punto de Vista* and the CCS, were now being recognised as authoritative figures, as they entered national universities and research bodies, and established new syllabi in the institutions reformed during the transition to democracy. Alongside these changes, *Punto de Vista* was consolidated as a publication of reference in the Argentine cultural and intellectual field, while its members published key books, that are now fundamental pieces in the Argentine intellectual tradition, such as Portantiero and Nun's *Ensayos sobre la transición democrática*, Sarlo and Altamirano's, *Ensayos argentinos*, or Sarlo's *Una modernidad periférica*.

However, the understandable optimism that characterised this epoch decreased as Alfonsín's juridical strategy suffered cracks and setbacks mainly due to the pressures exercised by the military, while economic problems began to asphyxiate his administration. This moment marked the decline of the utopias encouraged by the transition, of which *Punto de Vista* had been a driving force. Indeed, one of the main goals of the CCS, made explicit in its manifesto, was to consolidate a reformed socialism in Argentina. They were unable achieve such an ambitious goal as intellectuals found no political parties to put forward this project, since although they endorsed Alfonsín, as a

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Alberto Díaz (Buenos Aires, 5 May 2017).

group they were not willing to join the Radical Party. The political situation in Argentina was also very discouraging, as Alfonsín's government, which was closer to the political principles set forth by the CCS, was replaced by Carlos Menem's neoliberal government, which was at the antipodes of the Punto de Vista group's ideological preferences.

An inevitable question emerges at this point: to what extent did these intellectuals contribute to the consolidation of democracy in Argentina? As seen in the last chapters, they played a decisive role in the reconstruction of culture, from the activities organised at the CCS to the reflection on the traumatic past, from the new syllabi they designed in the fields of humanities and social sciences to the connections they established with foreign scholars and institutions. However, the goal of becoming more significant players in the political arena – an example that comes to mind is Fernando Henrique Cardoso in Brazil – was far from being realised.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, there were unequal perceptions of how intellectuals should engage with politics. Sarlo, for example, encouraged the political participation of the members of the CCS, while others were less keen on it. This discussion led to the fracture of the CCS founding group, which revealed the difficulties in maintaining the cohesiveness of the project.

In this context, there was a sense of loss of meaning for intellectuals, whose advice was no longer required by the political class, while academic hyper-specialisation threatened to dissolve the figure of the public intellectual. This crisis was reflected in *Punto de Vista*, as its editors envisaged that times were changing, intellectual discourses were turning more specific, and distant from the political issues of the day. This was an important conundrum for the group, for they generally defined themselves as intellectuals exploring the tension between politics and culture from the pages of an intellectual magazine, or in their own words, as 'intelectuales de izquierda en el marco de la democracia'.<sup>14</sup> This definition suggested an emphasis on politics which the magazine never renounced. The fact that the magazine lasted until 2008 reveals that there was still

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<sup>13</sup> Fernando Henrique Cardoso is a Brazilian sociologist born in 1931 and known for his significant contributions to the theory of dependency in Latin America. He is considered a main intellectual in Latin America and he was, also, president of Brazil between 1995 and 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Punto de Vista, 'Editorial. Décimo año', p. 2.

a place for the kind of intellectual intervention, between culture and politics, that *Punto de Vista* represented.

These last considerations point to a discussion which concerns the present times, namely, the current role of intellectuals in Argentina. Regarding the members of the *Punto de Vista* group, they did not disappear from the public sphere. Beatriz Sarlo, for example, still directed *Punto de Vista* when she was invited, along with Halperín Donghi, to the Presidential Residence by the Kirchners. Some years after this encounter she published, for example, *La audacia y el cálculo* (2011), a sharp critique of Néstor Kirchner's political figure. She is now frequently invited on TV shows and writes opinion columns in widely-read newspapers and, arguably, she has never been as famous in the country as she is today. Carlos Altamirano was one of the first guests on a TV program, *Odisea Argentina*, which has become very popular and where the political events of the day are analysed from a distinctively intellectual viewpoint.<sup>15</sup> However, there is a considerable distance between what these intellectuals can convey in a twenty-minute TV appearance, and what they used to express in long, articulate essays, published in reviews edited by them. Moreover, there is no single intellectual group that can be identified as such in Argentina today. No other magazine has replaced *Punto de Vista*; that is, no new magazine has been able to produce the kind of articles *Punto de Vista* used to include in its pages, nor represent a compact group of intellectuals.

These last remarks should not be read as mourning the lack of intellectual groups in today's Argentina. *Punto de Vista*, as Sarlo described it, was regarded by its editors as 'la clave de bóveda de su vida intelectual', and can therefore be considered an important episode in the history of Argentine intellectuals.<sup>16</sup> However, this does not mean that new forms of intellectual discourses and new types of intellectual publications will not appear in the future.

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<sup>15</sup> This TV show is hosted by Carlos Pagni, a journalist and historian who first worked in the newspaper *Ámbito Financiero* and later in *La Nación*. His opinion columns usually offer a sharp interpretation of Argentine political events and in 2016 he launched the TV show *Odisea Argentina* first broadcast in *Canal 26*, later in the news channel *TN*, and lastly, in the channel owned by the newspaper *La Nación*, launched in 2017. An interesting interview/profile of Carlos Pagni can be found in Mario Santucho and others, 'El aristócrata que quería ser marginal', *Crisis*, no. 17 (2014) <<http://www.revistacrisis.com.ar/notas/el-aristocrata-que-queria-ser-marginal>> [accessed 08 July 2019].

<sup>16</sup> Sarlo, 'Final', p. 2.

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## Appendix

This appendix comprises a selection of interviews that I have conducted between 2012 and 2017, which, in most cases, were recorded in audio files and later transcribed. For reasons of space, I could not include the full interviews, but I selected the most significant parts, which I cite in this thesis.

Carlos Altamirano<sup>1</sup>

About *Los Libros*

*Los Libros* pretendió ser originariamente el ingreso de una nueva crítica en el espacio intelectual argentino, en donde se hacía una lectura de libros, sofisticada, pero que no pretendía ser del esnobismo que representaba, por ejemplo, *Primera Plana*. De todos modos, si vos te considerabas una persona lista sabías que *Primera Plana* era una revista que te enseñaba una manera más sofisticada de entender las cosas, todas las cosas, la política y obviamente también las cosas relativas a la cultura. Pero a los ojos de la izquierda, *Primera Plana* significaba algo así como una modernización burguesa cuyos frutos no necesariamente eran los frutos que debían esperarse de una lectura adecuada de la cultura, de la literatura.

Lo que uno encuentra en *Los Libros*, entonces, es la crítica más moderna que se está haciendo en ese momento fuera de la universidad. El director, Schmucler, pasa un tiempo en Francia y vuelve con la idea de hacer algo como *La Quinzaine littéraire*, que salía en Francia y que daba cuenta de todas las publicaciones que se producían en determinado período. Al lado del título de *Los Libros* decía ‘un mes de libros en América

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<sup>1</sup> Carlos Altamirano (b. 1939) is Senior Researcher at CONICET and Emeritus Professor at the University of Quilmes. He was co-founder of *Punto de Vista* and he is the chief editor of the academic journal *Prismas. Revista de Historia Intelectual*. He was Visiting Professor at Harvard University and he is Honorary Professor at the University Ricardo Palma and the University of Mar del Plata. Some of his most renowned books are *Ensayos argentinos: De Sarmiento a la vanguardia* (co-authored with Beatriz Sarlo, 1983); *Peronismo y cultura de izquierda* (2001); *Para un programa de historia intelectual* (2005); *Intelectuales. Notas de investigación sobre una tribu inquieta* (2007). He is also the editor of *Historia de los intelectuales en América Latina* (2008).

I conducted this interview in Carlos Altamirano’s apartment, located in central Buenos Aires. Over the course of two hours, Altamirano answered my questions with an accurate and precise use of language, thanks to which I almost did not have to edit the interview.

Latina'. Uno podía ver eso como un capítulo del proceso a través del cual la crítica literaria y el comentario de libros ponía en ejercicio nuevos instrumentos de lectura que procedían de la lingüística, del estructuralismo, del psicoanálisis y de un marxismo más sofisticado que el marxismo que se practicaba hasta entonces.

Mi incorporación a *Los Libros* se produjo luego de una reunión donde conocí a una serie de personas, como León Rozitchner o Ricardo Piglia. Piglia participaba en *Los Libros* y era amigo personal de Schmucler, quien decide hacer una reestructuración de la revista y le propone a Ricardo integrarse. Piglia le dice '¿Por qué no le decimos a Carlos Altamirano?' y ahí me integré yo a un trío por el año 1970 o 1971. En esa época yo era una persona muy radical. Pensé que había que darle otro aire a la revista, entonces propuse 'Para una crítica política de la cultura' y esa pasó a ser su consigna hasta su desaparición. Se produjo poco después otra reestructuración, y Schmucler propuso ampliar un poco el consejo de redacción nuevamente al incorporar a Beatriz Sarlo, Miriam Chorne y Germán García. La revista iba politizándose crecientemente porque yo creo que nada en aquel momento escapaba a una especie de politización general. Esto lo digo viéndolo ahora con la distancia que da el tiempo, porque en aquel entonces era el clima que respirábamos, era natural que *Los Libros* se politizara.

#### About *Punto de Vista*

Que a un grupo intelectual se le ocurra sacar una revista no es un hecho excepcional, más bien es bastante regular. Lo distintivo podría ser la ilusión que iba asociada con la idea de que se podía sacar una revista a fines de 1977. Creíamos que debíamos complementar lo que habíamos hecho antes, que era reunir un grupo de gente para discutir de literatura argentina y que el paso siguiente era tener una revista. A Vanguardia Comunista le pareció bien, y este parecer no fue solo un 'estamos de acuerdo con la idea', sino un 'estamos dispuestos a poner dinero para financiar la revista' y pusieron dinero para los primeros números.

#### About the sociology of literature

En ese tiempo, Beatriz Sarlo y yo comenzamos a escribir una serie de trabajos juntos, poniendo en esta sociedad lo que cada uno sabía más. El resultado de esa colaboración

son unos libros destinados a darle nuevos fundamentos a una sociología de la literatura, y por otro lado, publicamos algunos ensayos de estudio de literatura argentina. Recibimos la influencia de Pierre Bourdieu y Raymond Williams. Recuerdo haber leído una traducción de un número de *Les Temps Modernes* consagrado al estructuralismo y que Siglo XXI publicó como *Problemas del estructuralismo*. Allí aparece un señor, Pierre Bourdieu, que firma un artículo que se llama ‘Campo intelectual y proyecto creador’. Después cuando comenzamos a trabajar juntos con Beatriz este autor y este trabajo comenzaban a jugar fuertemente en nuestra percepción de cómo debía ser un enfoque sociológico de la literatura. Una nota al pie de este escrito de Bourdieu remitía a un autor que para nosotros era desconocido: Raymond Williams, y a partir de ahí comenzó el proceso de apropiación de este otro autor. Lo anómalo era introducir en un medio cultural afrancesado como el argentino un autor inglés, que además hablaba de cosas que tenían que ver con la cultura intelectual y la literatura inglesa.

#### About *Controversia*

María Teresa Gramuglio tenía una hermana en México que estaba exiliada con su familia, a quien fue a visitar con su marido a fines de 1978 y llevó varios números de *Punto de Vista*. Luego fui a México y establecí vínculos con la gente de *Controversia*. Con algunos de ellos había tenido relaciones de amistad: Tula, Aricó, Portantiero. Ellos estaban en primer lugar asombrados de que se pudiera sacar una revista en Buenos Aires y que la revista tuviera ese tono, y ahí nació entonces un vínculo con la idea de que nosotros publicáramos cosas de ellos y ellos publicaran cosas de nosotros, todo muy informal.

Cuando se produce la Guerra de las Malvinas no teníamos la misma posición, nosotros estábamos en contra, considerábamos que era una aventura irresponsable, y ellos se habían enganchado un poco con lo de la guerra. Me acuerdo de que Beatriz escribió una carta muy fuerte criticando esa posición, pero no produjo una ruptura, sino que se precipitó el fin de la guerra por la derrota y todos ellos luego salieron de ese lugar y empezaron a autocriticarse, por lo tanto, eso reforzó los lazos que por ese momento podrían haber sido de ruptura.

## Sergio Bufano<sup>2</sup>

### Exile in Mexico

Participo de las Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación desde 1970 hasta diciembre de 1976 cuando ya parto hacia el exilio. Esos años son muy turbulentos, porque la cuestión era tratar de alcanzar el poder, con cierta ingenuidad juvenil y sobre todo mucho ímpetu y ganas. Estuve preso un par de veces, siempre por un breve lapso y finalmente decidí salir del país porque me secuestran y logro fugarme de un centro de detención.

En México empieza un período completamente diferente. Si bien los dos primeros años que estoy allí todavía seguía con la idea de regresar y levantar la bandera de la revolución, luego me junto con el grupo de *Controversia*. En esa revista estaban Juan Carlos Portantiero, José Aricó, Oscar Terán, Héctor Schmucler, Nicolás Casullo (que venía del peronismo) y Rubén Caletti (también peronista). El único que no venía de la academia era yo, entonces para mí *Controversia* fue una escuela formidable porque de pronto escuchaba cosas que durante los siete años de guerrilla jamás ni había leído ni había escuchado, lo que me obligó a escribir, a pensar, a leer. El exilio en ese sentido fue muy productivo. El primer número de la revista decía ‘sufrimos una derrota atroz’, y decir esto en 1978 era inconveniente porque la izquierda no reconocía que había habido una derrota del campo popular, de la izquierda en general.

### The transition to democracy

En el momento de la transición veíamos la victoria de Alfonsín con un entusiasmo absoluto. El mismo entusiasmo que había depositado en los años setenta en la revolución lo depositaba en esa nueva experiencia que se abría en Argentina. La CONADEP, el juicio a las juntas, todo eso provocaba mucho entusiasmo.

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<sup>2</sup> Sergio Bufano (b. 1943) is a writer and a journalist. During the dictatorship, he lived in Mexico as a political exile and was staff member of *Controversia*. Upon his return to Argentina, he co-founded the Club de Cultura Socialista and participated in the Grupo Esmeralda. He was chief editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Argentina edition) and author of several books, such as *Cuentos de Guerra sucia* (1984) and *Perón y la triple A*, co-authored with Lucrecia Teixidó (2015). He also founded the magazine *Lucha Armada* (2004-2008), dedicated to the reflection on the political violence of the 1970s.

This interview was carried out in Sergio Bufano's apartment located in the neighbourhood of Almagro, in Buenos Aires.

Después, un amigo que estaba en el Grupo Esmeralda preguntó si no quería ir a trabajar al grupo de discursos de Alfonsín. Porque yo en México, junto con Casullo y Caletti, había trabajado haciendo discursos para López Portillo, el presidente de México en ese entonces. El día que lo conocí a Alfonsín fue muy gracioso porque el que me había invitado a participar me dice ‘vamos, vamos, que tenemos reunión con el presidente’. Íbamos a Olivos y paramos en la puerta y mi amigo me dice ‘mira Sergio, vos que pensabas que ibas a saltar este muro con un fusil en la mano para tomar el poder’.

Alfonsín era un tipo muy campechano, muy buena persona. Con la obediencia debida y el punto final, yo me opuse al gobierno, firmé todas las solicitadas en contra y fui a todas las manifestaciones contra esas leyes. Pero los lunes iba a Olivos y Alfonsín ni mencionaba el tema, aunque por supuesto sabía que yo estaba en contra.

#### Club de Cultura Socialista

Al llegar a Argentina los que veníamos de México nos encontramos con el grupo de *Punto de Vista*. La primera reunión que yo recuerdo se hace en el Club del Progreso y ahí empieza la experiencia del CCS. El Club congregaba intelectuales muy importantes, y la idea era que fuera una usina que diera ideas a ese gobierno al que inicialmente todos apoyamos. En el CCS había gente que no tenía que ver con el socialismo, que no había tenido nunca ninguna militancia. A veces nos reíamos porque venían a preguntarnos qué opinaba el CCS sobre tal medida de Alfonsín y el CCS no opinaba, no había una opinión, había diez opiniones y todas divergentes.

Posiblemente Beatriz [Sarlo] tuviera una idea, un proyecto, de un grupo que participara más activamente en la política. Y ahí nadie participaba activamente. Al mismo tiempo, Beatriz, que había sido muy pro-alfonsinista, empieza a hacer críticas al gobierno. Tenía razón porque también veíamos que el radicalismo en el gobierno estaba haciendo algunas cosas lamentables, pero cuando estás adentro sos más benévolo. Beatriz era dura y la gente de *Punto de Vista* era mucho más crítica y se producían encontronazos, aunque después íbamos a cenar todos juntos.

La ruptura con Beatriz en 1993 fue un agujero para el CCS porque su voz y sus opiniones eran importantes. Además, antes de que se fuera Beatriz, murió Pancho. Eran dos pilares muy importantes que chocaban constantemente, pero que de todos modos

producían una efervescencia intelectual dentro del grupo. A partir de allí el CCS empieza un declive que va a durar varios años. Incluso hubo un momento en el que se hizo hasta tedioso ir todos los viernes porque de pronto no teníamos mucho para discutir.

### Alberto Díaz<sup>3</sup>

#### Exile

En México nosotros no caíamos tan bien. El mayor elogio que te podían hacer era decirte ‘no parecés argentino’, lo que era una declaración de amor. Rafael Filippelli, por ejemplo, si le preguntaban si le gustaba el picante, te podía responder ‘No sé porque nunca lo probé’. Hacía siete, ocho años que vivía en México y no había probado un taco. Era una exageración, los había probado, pero te salía con esas cosas.

#### Return to Argentina and the Club de Cultura Socialista

Volví a Argentina en 1983, junto con el ochenta por ciento de los exiliados. Fundamos en ese momento el CCS, que tuvo su etapa más gloriosa cuando estaba en la calle Bartolomé Mitre y éramos unos setenta miembros. Había elecciones regulares, y recuerdo que el primer presidente fue Pancho y la segunda fue Beatriz. Teníamos una declaración de principios, que cuando la hicimos nos parecía totalmente socialdemócrata y a medida que pasaba el tiempo nos parecía cada vez más leninista. Porque empezamos con lo de la socialdemocracia en México, pero a Lenin no se lo tocaba, a Marx mucho menos.

Nos reuníamos todos los viernes y la comisión directiva se encargaba de programar, de pagar los alquileres, etc. Encargaban a alguien que hablara de la coyuntura política del momento. Portantiero presentaba muy bien las coyunturas porque tenía un discurso muy ordenado y era muy político. Pancho era más divagante. En otros temas pasó gente importantísima, Alfonsín pasó por el Club, venían seguido Halperín Donghi o

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<sup>3</sup> Alberto Díaz (b. 1944) is chief editor of the publishing house Planeta. Prior to 1976, he founded the first foreign branch of Siglo XXI in Buenos Aires. After 1976, he went into exile first in Colombia, and later in Mexico, where he participated in groups and meetings of Argentine exiles. Upon his return to Argentina he co-founded the Club de Cultura Socialista and was chief editor of the publishing house Alianza, until 1991.

Alberto Díaz agreed to welcome me at his office at Editorial Planeta, located in the southern neighbourhood of Montserrat, in Buenos Aires.

Saer. El CCS tenía entonces mucho prestigio porque vos le pedías a cualquier intelectual argentino la charla y venía a darla. En un momento la fundación Ebert nos tiró algunos pesos y con eso invitamos al intendente de Porto Alegre, que era del PT. También venía gente de Uruguay del Frente Amplio y de Chile venía generalmente [Carlos] Ominami. Con el instituto Gramsci de Italia teníamos relaciones también, vía Pancho, Portantiero...todo ese grupo.

En el CCS había algunos roces, Pancho era más integrador, aunque siempre teníamos un problema con los jóvenes, que cuando venían, sólo duraban quince días. Teníamos grandes discusiones sobre si éramos sectarios o no. No es que fuéramos sectarios, es que eran muchos años de tener vida en común y había una especie de cofradía, relacionada con la militancia, el exilio. Para muchos, el plato fuerte era ir a comer después de la actividad.

## Horacio González<sup>4</sup>

### The 1960s

Leí aplicadamente todo lo que en aquel momento formaba parte de la renovación de la enseñanza de la sociología, te estoy hablando de principios de los años sesenta, en la facultad que en aquél momento estaba en la calle Viamonte. Habré demorado tres o cuatro años en ser uno de los tantos estudiantes insatisfechos con la universidad y entonces opté por explorar los caminos de la política estudiantil. En esa época formé parte de grupos de izquierda, pero no me interesaba especialmente la izquierda argentina, sino el peronismo.

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<sup>4</sup> Horacio González (b. 1944) is a sociologist and essayist. He lived in Brazil as a political exile and later returned to Argentina after the transition to democracy. He was director of the Argentine National Library between 2005 and 2015, during Néstor and Cristina Kirchner presidencies. He was member of *Unidos* and founder of the magazine *El Ojo Mocho*. He wrote several books of essays, such as *La ética picaresca* (Buenos Aires: Altamira, 1992), *Filosofía de la conspiración. Marxistas, peronistas y carbonarios*. (2004), and *Kirchnerismo, una controversia cultural* (2011). He remains one of the most prominent Peronist intellectuals in Argentina.

I interviewed Horacio González at the Ambassador's Residence in London, only a few months after starting my PhD. González was invited to deliver a lecture at the British Library, as he was, still in 2014, the director of the Biblioteca Nacional. The Argentine Ambassador at that moment, Alicia Castro, kindly helped me to interview him. For almost two hours, González talked about his memories of the dictatorship and of the 1980s in a majestic room decorated with tapestries and antique furniture. He kindly accompanied me to the door when I left. It was starting to rain and I remember he said 'Por fin veo algo de lluvia en Londres'.



Al mismo tiempo estaban los gramscianos argentinos, Portantiero y Aricó. Ellos habían leído a Gramsci en italiano y habían producido el corte en el Partido Comunista, habiendo sacado una revista formidable que era *Pasado y Presente*, cuya lectura es indispensable para comprender la época. *Pasado y Presente* publicaba todos esos escritos de la renovación del marxismo, pero alguien que estaba en el peronismo [como yo] no podía hacerse enteramente gramsciano porque ese lugar ya estaba ocupado por los gramscianos reales. Como el peronismo tenía su propio lenguaje, era posible por el sistema de porosidades que tenía el peronismo introducir otros lenguajes, pero nunca atacar el corazón mismo del sistema del peronismo.

#### The transition to democracy

Yo hoy recuerdo la época de Alfonsín mejor de lo que hablé en su momento de Alfonsín. Yo no lo había votado, aunque votar a Luder fue muy trabajoso también porque veía que Alfonsín decía cosas interesantes. Volví de Brasil para votar en un viaje de ómnibus de cuarenta horas porque pensé que era el billete de entrada para seguir discutiendo dentro del lugar donde era necesario, indispensable y casi único para discutir: el peronismo. Discutir sobre las masas populares, el sujeto de la historia y la revolución se tenía que hacer en el lugar malo de la historia. En cambio, Alfonsín no era malo, pero era insulso e inoperante, y además no podía ganar. Todas esas convicciones se diluyeron de inmediato cuando percibimos que no era así, que Alfonsín podía ganar citando la Constitución.

#### About *Unidos*

Hicimos con Chacho Álvarez la revista *Unidos*, que era un poco el intento de discutir con *Punto de Vista*. *Punto de Vista* era una revista que se basaba en Raymond Williams, en E. P. Thompson, en Roland Barthes y nosotros seguíamos con la idea de que había con una variable nacional de la cual partir. Si hoy lees las dos revistas en confrontación, *Punto de Vista* puede seguir leyéndose, mientras la otra ha caído en el lenguaje que se usaba en esa época. *Unidos* era una revista en el fondo alfonsinista, pero en su superficie peronista. Por eso nos interesó tanto el Discurso de Parque Norte de Alfonsín, que es quizás el único discurso de la época contemporánea en la Argentina.

También hubo muchas reuniones con el Club [de Cultura] Socialista, yo recuerdo dos o tres donde participé y que no fueron tensas, después fuimos a cenar juntos. Había una tensión y un complementarismo con el CCS que también percibió lo que te dije, que *Unidos* dentro del peronismo tomaba la teoría democrática, es decir, hacía un gesto de sacrificio enorme, siendo que en el peronismo se concebía la doctrina de Perón ocupando toda la escena y admitiendo todas las alas posibles, pero a condición de que ‘dentro de esto todo, fuera nada.’ Eso se rompía en *Unidos*, porque la revista aceptaba la teoría democrática, es decir, que el peronismo era una fuerza más que convivía con otras en la competencia electoral.

Adrián Gorelik<sup>5</sup>

The 1980s

En 1982 yo me incorporo a la Sociedad Central de Arquitectos, donde estaba Pancho Liernur, quien tenía un vínculo muy fuerte con *Punto de Vista*. Él organizó cursos que tomábamos con Sarlo, Altamirano, Vezzetti y, cuando regresaron del exilio, con Aricó, Terán y Portantiero. Fue como una suerte de formación de crítica cultural, en donde leíamos a Bourdieu, Williams, ese aparato teórico que Beatriz y Carlos estaban desplegando en ese momento.

The Club de Cultura Socialista

Nosotros – el grupo de arquitectos en el que estábamos Anahí Ballent, Graciela Silvestri y yo – hacíamos cursos en el CCS, alrededor de 1985, pero íbamos con poca regularidad. Yo tenía ciertos reparos con toda esa renovación autocrítica de la izquierda, porque yo había tenido una militancia tardía en el trotskismo y tenía una desconfianza fuerte con el

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<sup>5</sup> Adrián Gorelik (b. 1957) is an architect and Doctor in History for the University of Buenos Aires. He is Senior Researcher at CONICET and Professor of Intellectual History at the University of Quilmes. He is co-editor of *Prismas. Revista de Historia Intelectual* and was editor of *Punto de Vista* between 1992 and 2008. He has written several books on urban studies, such as *Miradas sobre Buenos Aires: historia cultural y crítica* (2004), and *La grilla y el parque: espacio público y cultura urbana en Buenos Aires, 1887-1936* (1998).

I met Adrián Gorelik at his studio located in the neighbourhood of Caballito, in Buenos Aires. He welcomed me with mate and we talked about *Punto de Vista* and the Club de Cultura Socialista for about one hour.

CCS. Para mí, el Club se proclamaba muy pluralista, pero al mismo tiempo todos sus integrantes compartían una línea muy clara que era una identificación socialdemócrata.

Luego, Beatriz Sarlo y yo empezamos a tener más relación a partir de un artículo que publicamos en *Punto de Vista* en 1988, entonces empiezo a escribir más en la revista y también a ayudar a Beatriz con el armado de la revista, y finalmente ella propone que yo entre al consejo.

En ese momento, también, ella me propone presentarme en una elección del CCS, que ganamos. Nosotros propusimos una inserción más militante en una izquierda más democrática. Nos parecía intolerable esa suerte de clima liviano que veíamos en el Club, una institución difícil de empujar para propuestas un poco más activas que no fuera reunirse una vez por semana a tomar whisky y a escuchar a quien iba. Nosotros imaginábamos una institución capaz de tener iniciativas que marcaran una diferencia en la izquierda.

### Daniel Link<sup>6</sup>

#### About the cultural preferences of *Punto de Vista*

*Punto de Vista* optó por Saer en contra de Puig, y también en contra de Aira. Por lo general la revista no pudo leer aquello que tuviera que ver, siquiera por contacto, con la cultura de masas. Como Saer la había impugnado *tout court*, era un autor que servía como garantía. Diría, entonces, que *Punto de Vista* siempre tuvo un horror a cualquier punto de vista que pudiera parecerse al populismo.

Por otra parte, no diría que *Punto de Vista* es una revista pseudovanguardista (porque, de hecho, las manifestaciones más vanguardistas le resultaron siempre sospechosas). Diría que *Punto de Vista* tuvo una relación de dependencia, en el sentido en que se usa la palabra en el contexto de las ‘adicciones’, con la cultura alta.

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Link (b. 1959) is a writer and a literary critic. He is Professor at the University of Buenos Aires, where he teaches twentieth-century literature. He has written several novels and books of essays, such as *Cómo se lee y otras intervenciones críticas* (2003), *Fantasmas. Imaginación y sociedad* (2009), and *Una lectura, una vida* (2017). He is also a frequent contributor to the newspapers *Página 12* and *Perfil*.

### Does *Punto de Vista* have heirs?

No. El mundo cambió mucho y muy rápidamente. Una vez, recuerdo que por un error de diagramación, la revista salió sin la bajada ‘Revista de cultura’. Con Andrés Di Tella encaramos a Beatriz para que nos dijera si eso significaba un renunciamento (la revista iba a dedicarse sólo a la política) o no. Beatriz se rió y nos garantizó que la cultura seguía siendo el norte de la revista.

### Was *Punto de Vista* against postmodernism?

No sé si *Punto de Vista* entendió la posmodernidad. En ese punto, tampoco sé si entendió la modernidad (salvo que se entienda que la modernidad es lo que dice Habermas). Creo que, después de los dos años más intensos de la polémica modernidad-posmodernidad, yo mismo me prohibí manejar esa categoría.

### Beatriz Sarlo<sup>7</sup>

#### About the 1960s

[En los sesentas] estaba la idea de que revolución estética y revolución política podían ir juntas y de hecho para algunos de los vanguardistas vinculados al Di Tella estaban juntas, como para Juan Pablo Renzi. Para ponerte un ejemplo, la exposición Tucumán Arde de la CGT de Paseo Colón para mí fue muy importante. Juan Pablo Renzi – a quien yo no conocía en ese momento – diseñó los *stickers* que íbamos pegando por las calles y en las lunetas de los coches, que eran una imagen pop que decía ‘Tucumán Arde’. Yo estaba en

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<sup>7</sup> Beatriz Sarlo (b. 1942) is an essayist and literary critic. She was Senior Researcher at CONICET and Professor at the University of Buenos Aires for twenty years. She has also delivered lectures at several US-based universities, such as Columbia, Berkeley, Maryland, Harvard, and Minnesota, and at Cambridge University in the UK. She is also a Fellow of the British Academy. In 1978, she co-founded *Punto de Vista*, and directed it for thirty years. Some of her most influential books, which have been translated into several languages, are: *Ensayos argentinos: De Sarmiento a la vanguardia* (co-authored with Carlos Altamirano, 1983); *Una modernidad periférica* (1985); *La imaginación técnica* (1992); *Borges: A Writer on the Edge* (1993); and *Escenas de la vida posmoderna. Intelectuales, arte y videocultura* (1994).

I met Beatriz Sarlo in 2012, when I first interviewed her at her studio on Talcahuano street, in downtown Buenos Aires. This studio has central room with a large, short, wooden table surrounded by bookshelves. On the walls, there are two or three small paintings that, as I could recognise, appeared in *Punto de Vista*. In hindsight, the project of this thesis originated during that first encounter, whose outcome was the interview that I later published in the website [artepolitica.com](http://artepolitica.com). Since then, I have met her every time I returned to Buenos Aires and the interviews transcribed here are a selection of those several encounters.

la CGT de Paseo Colón y recuerdo perfectamente el impacto que me causó llegar el día en que la CGT estaba convertida en una instalación. Eso fue muy significativo para mí, todo era posible, y todo quería decir también el mundo del arte y en el mundo de la estética.

#### About *Los Libros*

Yo estaba dando clases en Trelew en 1970 y ya había publicado en *Los Libros*, lo conocía mucho a Toto [Schmucler]. Toto había incorporado a Piglia y Altamirano al consejo de redacción de la revista y a Germán García y a Miriam Chorne. Ni Germán ni Miriam [representaban] opiniones políticas, mientras que uno podría decir que en el caso de Altamirano pasaba eminentemente y en el caso de Piglia también pasaba de manera muy fuerte y que ambos estaban muy próximos políticamente, aunque no pertenecían al mismo partido. Entonces ahí yo creo que entro para balancear junto con Toto – que se estaba volviendo peronista – el consejo de redacción, pero cuando me instalo para hacer ese balance ya no soy más peronista, sino del PCR. Estamos hablando de 1969, 1970, 1971 donde esos tránsitos se iban dando de manera subterránea con menos velocidad, pero con mucha velocidad una vez que se decidía el tránsito.

A partir de allí, nosotros nos apropiamos de la revista, lo cual consideramos que era extremadamente meritorio. Sacábamos la revista de la línea revisionista pro peronista y pro Montoneros que le quería imprimir Toto – este es mi pensamiento de entonces, no es mi calificación de ahora – y la poníamos en la correcta línea de la defensa de los intereses del proletariado y la revolución. Nos pareció que era lo que teníamos que hacer, fuimos muy felicitados por el partido (Altamirano y yo) y así nos quedamos con la revista.

#### About *Punto de Vista*

Sobre los aportes de *Punto de Vista*, yo creo que la introducción de los estudios culturales británicos es fundamental. Esos autores – Raymond Williams y Richard Hoggart – eran desconocidos y se imprimieron esos nombres por primera vez en Argentina en *Punto de Vista*. Otros autores importantes fueron Bourdieu y Jauss, se imprimieron por primera vez en *Punto de Vista*, es decir, todo lo que es estética de la recepción. Y hay algunos autores que hoy parecen casi desaparecidos pero que en ese momento eran interesantes. Hay, por

ejemplo, un reportaje y un texto de Raphael Samuel que era un historiador *from below* de los historiadores sociales culturales. Esos reportajes, artículos, notas de presentación de los autores me parece que fueron fundamentales. Lo otro importante fue lo que se marcó de algunas líneas de la literatura argentina. María Teresa Gramuglio escribió una nota muy importante sobre *La Cautiva*, y las notas que se escribieron sobre Saer también fueron importante. Cuando Fogwill decía que habíamos producido el valor de Saer por supuesto que era una ironía, pero *Punto de Vista* dio la batalla en el campo literario por Saer.

### Connection with other intellectuals

En 1979 comenzó la conexión con Rama, a quien Alberto Sato le sugirió mi nombre para hacer el Payró para la Biblioteca Ayacucho. Después otro exiliado, Ángel Núñez, que estaba en San Pablo me invitó a una reunión de literatura latinoamericana en la Universidad de Campinas. Me compré un pasaje por tierra y me fui a San Pablo y luego a Campinas. Ahí estaba Antonio Cándido, que fue la otra gran persona que yo conocí en ese momento, que es como un príncipe bondadoso de la crítica literaria brasileña y el primer promotor de la etnografía. Como es un príncipe bondadoso e igualitario en su trato, inmediatamente me hizo sentar a su mesa. Creo que todos se daban cuenta de que yo llegaba por tierra, que no tenía qué comer, ni qué beber. Y Ángel Rama puso su botella de whisky en la mesa la primera noche y nada, conocí a esas dos personas que fueron muy importantes y muy influyentes para mí. También estaba en esa reunión un crítico del área andina de la literatura latinoamericana que era Antonio Cornejo Polar. Eran tres figuras descomunales de la crítica literaria latinoamericana, en un momento por otra parte en donde la crítica literaria era una disciplina de primer rango. Que yo llegara con esas noticias a *Punto de Vista* y con esas relaciones fue muy importante.

### The making of *Punto de Vista*

Yo trabajaba muchísimo, tenía 40 años y por ende, tenía edad para trabajar mucho. Tenía, además, una gran ventaja: yo venía de aprender todo en la industria editorial, donde me había ganado la vida desde muy chica, trabajando en Eudeba.

Al comienzo de la dictadura vendíamos poquísimos ejemplares. De los primeros tres números habremos vendido 200 o 150 copias. Pudimos mantener esas impresiones porque pagamos con la plata de Vanguardia Comunista. Tuvo suerte *Punto de Vista* porque cuando se acabó esa plata, empezó a subir la venta. Además, hasta 1983 la repartía yo en quioscos, entonces el precio nos quedaba entero. Luego hubo épocas extraordinarias, incluso hubo un número agotado. La revista tenía unos 300 suscriptores, que era mucha entrada de dinero. Y las ventas se deben haber mantenido en 1200 o 1300 copias, lo cual hoy es imposible para una revista así. Las suscripciones nosotros las mantuvimos aunque en la época de Menem nos costó mucho porque recibíamos 50 dólares del exterior y nos costaba 100 mandarla y prácticamente trabajábamos en los quioscos para pagar las suscripciones de las bibliotecas norteamericanas. Nosotros sabíamos que el uno a uno no podía durar eternamente y teníamos la perspectiva de que la revista iba a durar – como duró – diez años más. Entonces mantuvimos las suscripciones, porque además hace a la difusión tener una revista en las bibliotecas norteamericanas. Una revista que no está en bibliotecas es una revista de barrio.

En cuanto a las ilustraciones, Juan Pablo [Renzi] y María Teresa [Gramuglio] tenían su palabra en eso porque conocían muy bien el medio plástico argentino. Juan Pablo hizo el primer rediseño de la revista, que a mi me pareció que no funcionó y lo volví a cambiar. Recurrí a Carlos Boccardo, que había estado próximo a Vanguardia Comunista. Fue Boccardo el que puso los dibujos de filón y rediseñó la revista, hizo una cosa más racionalista que la que venía haciendo. Boccardo estuvo mucho tiempo. Después hubo una etapa en que anduvo a la bartola. Y después entró Adrián, que volvió al racionalismo boccardiano y él se ocupaba de traer los dibujos.

Adrián Gorelik entra a ser secretario cuando yo me voy a Cambridge, creo que en 1992. Yo recuerdo que antes de irme a Cambridge yo estaba en Córdoba y le dije a Altamirano: ‘mira, yo llego a Buenos Aires y me tomo un avión, pero quiero hablar con vos antes’. Esas cosas, así de fondo, yo las discutía con Carlos. Y entonces Carlos vino a Córdoba, se quedó una semana y le dije: ‘creo que yo necesito a alguien en la revista, que no tiene que ser de la revista, porque ninguno de la revista puede tomar ese lugar y yo creo que esa persona es Adrián.’ Y Carlos estuvo de acuerdo. Bueno, después Vezzetti,

Adrián y yo nos fuimos del Club y todo empezó a tener fisuras, que no alcanzaron a fisurar la revista, pero que quedaron marcadas internamente.

### Intellectuals and politics

Nosotros no teníamos dónde referenciarlos políticamente, éramos puramente intelectuales, porque tampoco éramos alfonsinistas. Tampoco ninguno de nosotros era anti alfonsinista. Sobre todo en el juicio a las juntas reconocíamos la puerta por la cual había comenzado el proceso de transición democrática en la Argentina, pero no teníamos ninguna expectativa de que Alfonsín pudiera transformar el Partido Radical en algo mejor, que es lo que dice el Discurso de Parque Norte (escrito por Portantiero y Emilio). El Discurso de Parque Norte en sí mismo nos gustaba, pero nos parecía que Alfonsín no era el que iba a poder manejar ese conjunto de variables, de conflictos y de contradicciones de una nueva escena política.

La desgracia es que los intelectuales socialdemócratas no tenían ninguna socialdemocracia a la cual referirse, mientras que los intelectuales peronistas tenían el vasto mosaico del peronismo al cual aludir, así que en un punto eran más realistas que los intelectuales socialdemócratas. Yo lo digo de mí misma: una socialdemócrata sin partido. O sea que lo que nos diferenciaba era eso, el carácter completamente ideal de nuestra identificación política, nuestra identificación era ideológica y en términos políticos era completamente imaginaria. Pancho Aricó y yo hacíamos el tour semanal a los dos partidos socialistas, básicamente íbamos al Partido Socialista Democrático porque era el que estaba en Buenos Aires y no obteníamos demasiado de ese tour semanal.

### Horacio Tarcus<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Horacio Tarcus (b. 1955) is an historian and Senior Researcher at CONICET. He participated in several publications such as *Praxis* and *El Rodaballo*. He is also the founder of the Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierda (CeDInCI), the most important archive dedicated to leftist culture in Argentina. He has authored several books on Argentine leftist culture, such as *El marxismo olvidado en la Argentina* (1996), *Mariátegui en la Argentina* (2002), *Diccionario biográfico de la izquierda argentina* (2007), *Marx en la Argentina. Sus primeros lectores obreros, intelectuales y científicos* (2007), and *El socialismo romántico en el Río de la Plata* (2016).

I interviewed Horacio Tarcus at his office in CeDInCI. This is an old and small building located on a quiet street in Caballito neighborhood.



Siempre vi [al CCS] como la unión entre los que se fueron y los que se quedaron, y que habían entretejido una trama político intelectual personal social amistosa, y a su vez esa trama estaba sobredeterminada por un balance de lo que fueron los sesentas y setentas y que yo no compartía y que me parece que buena parte de mi generación tampoco.

Varias veces me invitaron a exponer al Club y yo me sentí muy cómodo, la discusión fue fuerte, pero amigable. La primera vez que fui, me invitó Aricó para discutir un texto suyo sobre el debate reforma-revolución, alrededor de 1986. Después en 1996 me invitaron cuando publiqué *El marxismo olvidado*. En una de las cenas post-charla Emilio de Ípola me dice: ‘¿por qué no te asocias al club?, esto es un club social, un club de amigos’. Esto daba cuenta de que el CCS tenía ceremonias y ritos de sociabilidad. Eran una generación de gente que a mí siempre me interesó, pero a la que yo no pertenecía. Compartía con ellos la idea de que había habido una derrota política de la izquierda. Que esa derrota remitía a problemas teóricos en los programas políticos de las izquierdas, pero yo no creía que la socialdemocracia a nivel internacional, o la tercera vía, ni el alfonsinismo al nivel local fueran espacios superadores que permitieran recuperar los valores de la generación de los sesenta y setenta. A mí me parecían queribles, respetables, fueron la generación anterior a la de mis pares, pero desde el punto de vista político intelectual para mí fueron bastante decepcionantes.

### Hugo Vezzetti<sup>9</sup>

Empiezo a escribir hacia el comienzo de *Punto de Vista*, que fue una revista en la que yo me formaba al mismo tiempo que escribía. Todos veníamos de un desengaño y de una separación de nuestras respectivas organizaciones, Beatriz y Carlos se habían ido del PCR y yo me había ido de Vanguardia Comunista.

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<sup>9</sup> Hugo Vezzetti (b. 1944) is a psychologist and former Senior Researcher at CONICET. He was Dean of the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Buenos Aires during the transition to democracy and he was editor of *Punto de Vista* for almost thirty years. His work mainly focuses on the history of psychology in Argentina and the memory of the dictatorship. Some of his most important books are *La locura en la Argentina* (1983), *Pasado y presente. Guerra, dictadura y sociedad en la Argentina* (2002), and *Sobre la violencia revolucionaria: memorias y olvidos* (2009).

I met Hugo Vezzetti twice for this interview, in a typical *porteño* café, with formica tables and where burnt coffee is often served, in Palermo neighbourhood. Vezzetti enthusiastically shared his memories with me, and gave me a very good insight of *Punto de Vista*. However, the first meeting was interrupted due to a memorable World Cup football match, between Germany and Brazil, that July 2014.

*Punto de Vista* no se hace sin Beatriz, ella la cargaba al hombro, hacía todo, la escribía y la llevaba a los quiscos. Los que tenían ahí la posición más política eran Beatriz y Carlos. En un principio yo acompañaba, creo que mis propuestas de intervención en el contenido del número aparecen a través de algunas colaboraciones mías sobre mi propia investigación sobre los hospicios de Buenos Aires y después hay un momento en que yo empiezo a intervenir sobre algunos trabajos de Foucault o la muerte de Lacan, más hacia los ochenta.

Creo que en los años de *Punto de Vista* en que se introduce lo que se conoce como la crisis del marxismo todavía está ahí como un tema ¿seguimos creyendo de fondo en el modelo leninista de que en algún momento hay que tomar violentamente el estado? Creo que el que resistía más a eso, pero nunca abiertamente, fue Ricardo [Piglia], pero esas cosas se dirimían en términos humorísticos. Yo me acuerdo de haberle dicho medio en broma ‘vos sos el último bolchevique’, que podía ser una crítica pero también era un reconocimiento de que mantenía firme sus ideas.

Cuando Piglia se alejó de *Punto de Vista*, nunca hizo muy públicas las razones, fiel a su estilo. Pero la ruptura fue política. En su visión la revista estaba tomando una orientación demasiado socialdemócrata. Y creo que esa fecha puede ser indicadora de un momento de transición de mi propia posición. En ese momento asumo, quizás más explícitamente, que todo eso que yo todavía no había querido revisar demasiado, entra en crisis. Ahí empecé a leer yo mismo el material que Beatriz y Carlos hacían circular y también los que provenían de los que estaban en México, como Pancho Aricó, alrededor del tema de la revalorización de la democracia. Creo que la separación de Ricardo sirve como un punto de inflexión.